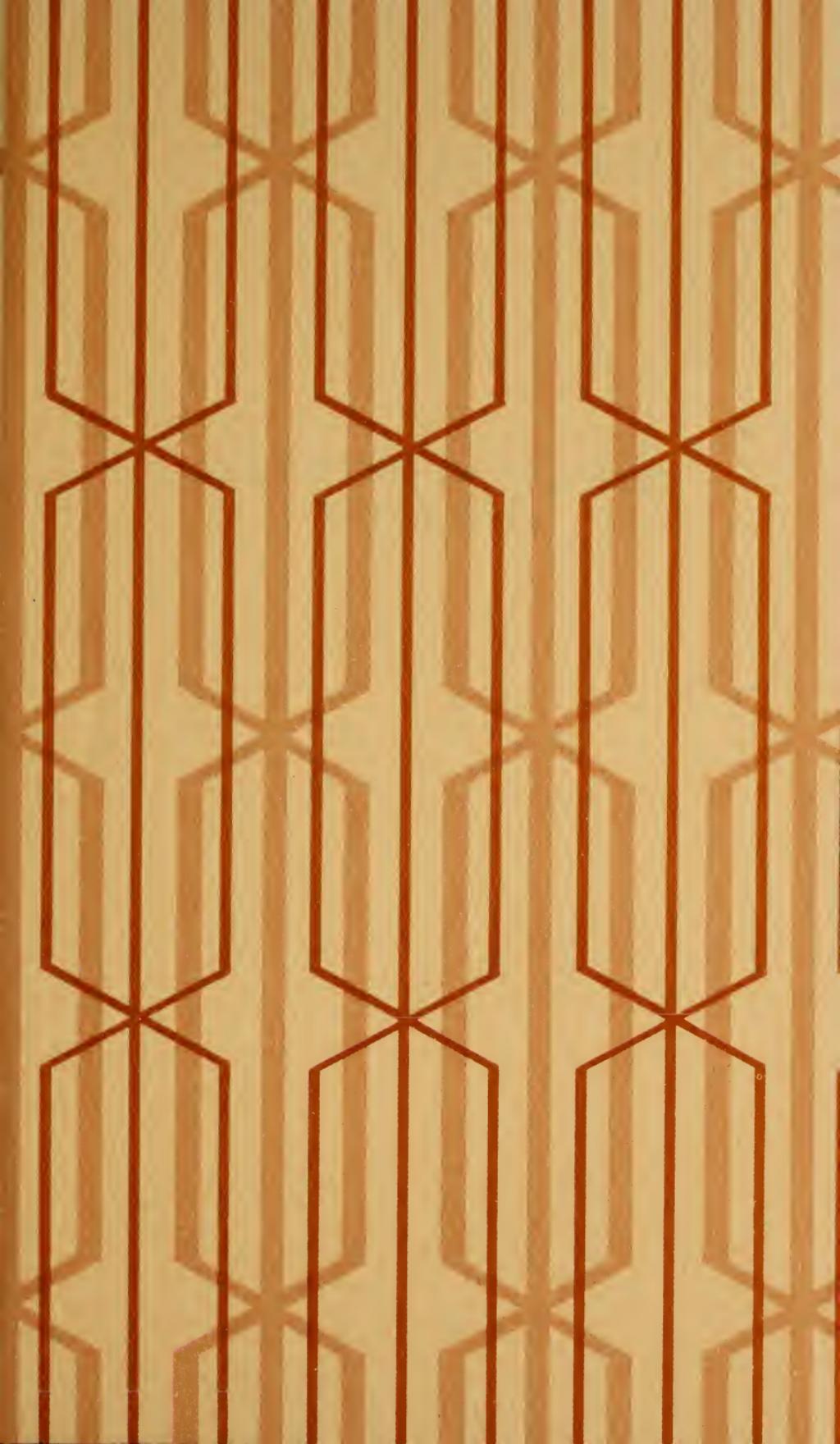




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THE HOUND OF IRELAND
AND OTHER STORIES



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THE
HOUND OF IRELAND
AND OTHER STORIES

BY
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Short Story Index Reprint Series



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I

THE HOUND OF IRELAND

So Ireland was free at last! Glory be to God and the blue sky over us! Ireland was free! He took his glasses off and wiped them, and again he read the account of the opening of a Home Rule Parliament in Dublin, "in the Old House in College Green," as the agitators' phrase used to go, where Grattan had thundered. Young men! New men! There were none of the old feudists left, barring himself, and a moisture had come into his eyes that the former fighters should be dead—O'Brien and John Mitchel and Meagher of the Sword, and Charles Parnell and O'Leary, the Wild Goose. The bold Fenian men!

Where was O'Donovan Rossa now, he whom his captors manacled and forced to lap up his food for thirty days like a mongrel dog? And where was Davitt, who had but one arm? And James Finton Lawlor? And the little Captain of Cork? And all the men who tried to free Ireland, some by oratory, and some by dynamite, and some with pike and musket on the green hills? All were dead now, though their names should live for ever. And young men, bred in colleges, had taken up the

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burden, and not by romance but by brain power, not by open warfare but by a reign of fear, had secured autonomy for their country. Now that the great war had killed religious issues, they were winning over the hard Ulster Scottish to their side—the lean, hatchet-faced descendants of Gaidhlig islanders, men who never fought a losing fight.

He looked around the little tobacconist's shop with a smile, as a king might look at a disguise he was about to leave off. And he patted the great grey wolfhound by his side, that would have been more at home in the hall of some princely castle than in a little store of New Rochelle.

“Do you hear, big fellow? Ireland is free!”

Cuchulain laid a great shaggy paw on the old rebel's knee, as though he understood.

To be sure, the newspapers said that though Ireland was to have its parliament, its customs, its internal arrangements, yet the military power, the high judges and this and that were to be held by England. Old Shawn laughed. The first session of the Parliament in College Green would declare Ireland a free republic, and if the English didn't get out then and there, the young men would rise and drive them into the sea. Ah, God, what a pity it was that Meagher of the Sword was not alive to see this blessed day! But all were gone.

All but him, old Shawn Mahoney!

He was so old now that every day of life was precious to him was a surprise. When he went to bed at night that he would awake to mortal life in

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the morning was not a certain thing. Always at six in the new dawn the wolfhound would push him gently with its grey muzzle and he would open his eyes.

“Bless God and the new day!”

All he wanted to do now, all that he asked of life, was that he remain in it until he could tread the green Irish hills, and he had sworn when he left there more than half a century ago, with Cuchulain's grandsire by his side, and the police hot after him, that he would never return until Ireland was free.

He turned to the great wolf dog again, talking to him as though he were a human being, as he all but was.

“Did you hear me? Were you listening to me at all, at all? Ireland is free.”

The great hound thumped the ground with his tail, and it sounded like the welting of flails on a threshing floor. Then he rose and went to the door. Old Shawn watched him.

“You're right, big fellow. It's bundle and go!”

The new, the young men who were piloting Ireland to freedom spoke of economics, of statecraft, of internal and external taxation. They were for intensifying agricultural production, alleviating urban congestion, reviving the mining of coal and gold. To them Ireland was an estate in trust to be cared for and developed. And undoubtedly this was right.

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But the older men had thought only of setting Ireland free. And to them Ireland was no estate, but a lovable and downtrodden lady, pleading to her sons and lovers to be set free.

There was a picture of Ireland, which an artist had once drawn to represent her, and which had become popular, and this picture was ever in the elder rebels' minds. Ireland, a tall, magnificent, full-bosomed woman, with black hair and grey eyes, stood in the foreground, dressed in a loose flowing robe of white. Back of her was a round tower, one of those relics of the strange African colonies which had once sailed to her shores. Her hand was resting on the native harp, and by her side was the Irish wolf dog, biggest, fiercest, and most loyal of hounds. This was the Ireland poor Mangan saw when he wrote "My Dark Rosaleen."

There was Ireland! Of the dark-haired, full-bosomed women there were plenty in the country. The harp had not been forgotten. The east Irish coast was dotted with the Phœnician round towers to which a century was but as a year. But the great hound of Ireland had disappeared.

The last of the breed that the Goban Saor, the Master of the Irish Masons, developed, and that went to Cuchulain's heel, and the Ossian hunted with, was now in a little tobacconist's store in New Rochelle.

Of the authentic Irish wolfhound there are no specimens, so the dealers and breeders said, playing their game, which is more cunning than horse-copping. The last of the Celtic breed, they claim,

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was in the possession of the Knight of Kerry, and died in 1785. The breed now shown as Irish wolfhounds is a reconstruction, containing the following different schemes of different breeders, Scottish deerhounds, and Russian wolfhounds, and Norwegian elkhounds crossed on mastiff strain.

But the last did not die in the kennels of the Lord of Kerry in the eighteenth century. Kerry was the last Irish nobleman to keep them in his kennels. But scattered through the Galtee Mountains, Galtee More, and Galtee Beg, and in the wild country which paid tribute to Macgillicuddy of the Reeks as overlord, there were perhaps eight or ten huge animals, all bone and sinew, big as a small horse, grey, shaggy, spectral. When one put its webbed forefeet on a tall man's shoulders it towered a head above him. But there was little opportunity for breeding—a man had to travel perhaps twenty miles to find sire or dam—and so little by little they died, their usefulness gone now that they had killed all the wolves and elk of Ireland. The last of the breed had been Finn MacCool, the two-year-old pup that Shawn had brought from Ireland with him after '67.

It had hardly been a revolution, that '67, though men had been hanged for it, and buried in quicklime, and men had been deported and died in exile. It was just the magnificent and futile protest of a peasantry goaded to hysteria through misgovernment, led by romantic lovers of the country, who took to the hills with blunderbusses and pikes and a flag

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that had seen '98. One of the revolutionists, a strong farmer's son, brought with him Finn MacCool, the great dog.

"Sure he loves Ireland too," was the only explanation. And in a land of romance it was accepted without protest or wonder.

"Arrah. and why shouldn't you, hound of my heart?"

Against the meagre rebel commandos was thrown the majesty of the English army, horse and foot and guns, and generals cock-a-hoop. There were even the Coldstream Guards. And half the starved commandos were killed or captured, and another great victory won. In Shawn Mahoney's district the rising amounted only to a rapid skirmish behind the walls of a ruined church. Shawn had accounted for two of the opposing battalion, when he was plucked by the sleeve. Finn's owner was trying to cough a bullet up. "Glory be to God!" he choked. "I'm a dead man, that's what I am. Don't let them get the dog, Shawn. Don't let them have the dog!"

"They'll never have the dog," Shawn swore. . . .

When, a week later, after traversing the country by dead of night, he escaped from Waterford in a lugger to France, the dog went with him. In France they both found succour, as Irish rebels will anywhere on the Continent, where O'Neill is Duke of Tetuan in Spain, and where Byrne is a Freiherr of Saxony, and Taaffe, lord of Galway, is an Austrian prince.

France, with the memory of the Irish Brigade at

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Fontenoy, and the crash of Clare's Dragoons on Ramillies field, is ever kind. They protected the fleeing rebel and his great hound, that had also been under fire for Ireland, and sent them aboard a vessel for America. They bade them both God-speed, and when Shawn said that he would never return to Ireland until Ireland was free, they assured him he would return in a few years to "*l'Irlande libre*," though they shook their heads in private. Had not Lazare Hoche, the French general who conquered La Vendée, failed to free Ireland? And if a French general . . . *C'est dommage mais . . . Ah, la pauvre Irlande!*

He was not an orator. He was not a business man. He was not an organiser. He was only a lover of Ireland, who would lay down his life, if that were of any use, for his country's cause. But he was no particular asset in the fight the Irish Americans were waging, which was a war of money, of diplomacy, of politics. Little by little he came to take a back place in the councils of Clan-na-Gael. A thin, burning-eyed man, with a tremendous shyness, he was passed over when it came to easy jobs and political appointments. He wanted nothing, but if ever again they went out, as goes the Irish euphemism for revolution, he would be there gun in hand, and his dog would be with him. . . .

He left New York after a few months and located in New Rochelle, a town founded by rebels, and opened a small store where papers of interest to the Irish were sold, weekly editions of Dublin papers,

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New York papers edited by Irish Exiles, and his shop became the centre of Irish activities in Westchester County.

There were always Irish dropping in for a chat, old Irish who came to ask how Ireland was, and newer Irish immigrants who told him how it was since he left. And all their eyes would turn on Finn MacCool, grey, quiet, and dignified at the rear.

“Yerra, but that’s the gran’ dog entirely. One of the ould breed. And they do be saying that they’re all dead!”

“Begor, he’s the last of his tribe, sir!” Shawn would shake his head.

“All old things die, and the new ones are never as good. Once these dogs were common as terriers and now you could travel the thirty-two counties and you’d find ne’er a one.”

“A king’s dog, him!”

Winter and summer New Rochelle saw both of them at dawn, Shawn and his dog, going for exercise, and all the dogs knew him and rendered him fealty. Even the little sporting terriers were silent and the bulls cowered in their kennels as he went by. Once a borzoi, meeting him, dropped dead of fear.

But what was most remarkable was how he knew when Ireland was spoken about. He would prick up his ears and an intent look would come into his brown eyes.

At Irish gatherings, concerts, ceilides, he used to accompany Shawn and accept the welcome offered him with great dignity. He would only move when

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some reciter intoned the dirge for the true Earl of Lucan:

*Patrick Sarsfield, Erin's wonder,
Fought in the field with bolts of thunder.
One of Ireland's best commanders
Now lies food for the crows of Flanders!
Och ! Ochone !*

Then he would lift his head and bay sorrowfully with a belling that filled the street.

Or it might be the terrible lament for the victor of Benburb, done to death by the English:

*Did they dare, did they dare, to slay Owen Roe O'Neill ?
Yes, they slew with poison him they feared to meet with
steel !
May God wither up their hearts ! May their blood
cease to flow !
May they walk in living death who murdered Owen
Roe !*

Every hair on Finn's body would rise, and his white teeth strip and his great bulk balance itself on his haunches as though ready to spring. . . .

The years passed and patriots died. First Isaac Butt went, and then the great Parnell, and then came Dillon and Redmond and O'Brien. But Finn was growing old, and it seemed to Shawn Mahoney that with the ending of the great hound's race would end the hope of ever treading the hills of a free Ireland. . . .

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It was by nothing short of a miracle that the dynasty was saved. Shawn was doing some business in Port Chester when he ran into a wizened man with a great grey dog.

“Glory be to God! and what kind of a dog would you be calling that?”

“That’s a Scottish deerhound, mister.” The weazened man had a broad Scots accent.

“I’ve seen many a deerhound, but never a deerhound like that deerhound. Where in Scotland does she come from?”

“From Islay Island, mister.”

“From Islay Island. That’s no more nor twenty miles from Ireland.”

“That’s so, mister. And, what’s more, that breed o’ dog has been on Islay for nigh on two hundred years, and there’s not a half dozen in the world left, beyond Giorsal here, and what Campbell o’ Kilchoman, the poet, has on his place in Canada. They’re of Alan Dhu the piper’s strain, him that’s but a byword in the mouth of the people, he’s dead that long.”

“And he learned his piping in Ireland, I’ll be bound,” said Shawn. “Now, my friend, I’ve got a dog, and if you’re for mating her ladyship here——”

“She would no’ mate wi’ your ordinar’ deerhound, and, as for a Russian wolfhound”—he laughed—“she’d tear him to pieces——”

“Wait until you see my dog——”

So Finn MacCool was mated with Giorsal of Islay, and Giorsal threw two whelps.

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And Giorsal and one of them belonged to the Islay man, and the other to Shawn Mahoney—Oisin he called the pup. And Finn died a year later, and was buried with honours in a little copse near the golf course of Wykagyl. The Islay fisherman was not lucky. Distemper took Giorsal and Mac-Crimmen, her pup, but Oisin thrived and grew to powerful doghood, and with him revived Shawn's belief that Ireland would one day be free, and he would tread the hills of Munster, and the dark Rosaleen would be a queen again, not a fettered slave girl in the house of the slavering Saxons. . . .

Though he hated to think it, Shawn always believed that Oisin was a better dog than Finn. There was not much to choose between them as far as physical power and appearance went. Oisin was a trifle cleaner in the legs, a trifle heavier in the chest, a trifle better about the collar than his sire. But he was a more dignified, a more princely dog. He was the hound of romance. In his brown eyes one could see Ireland of the elder days: the Red Branch knights, carousing at Emain Macha, the Children of Lear on the shadowy waters, Maeve the magnificent, the glory of the Fenians, the crash of the Danish battles. Gentle and strong, he might have been a companion of Patrick the saint as he stood against the magic of the Druids on Tara Hill.

And New York grew and with it New Rochelle. And into the old Huguenot township there came a bevy of people of the theatre, who trod the sturdy Huguenot stones with mincing gait and affected gesture, very theatrical, eye-compelling. But perhaps

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in all America there was nothing more dramatic than the grey-haired rebel in his dingy little tobacconist's shop, with the great dog an emperor would have coveted.

Came a change over Ireland too. There was the victory of the Land League; there was the new beneficent legislation; there were the old-age pensions, the labourers' cottages, the this-and-that material things, but freedom there was none.

"Look at what we have given them," England clamoured to the world.

"A blind man wants more than a loaf of bread," the Irish replied. "He wants the sight of his eyes."

"What is wrong?"

"Our sons, Celts, are born serfs to an alien king. That is wrong!"

"You Irish!"

There seemed no prospect of freedom, and Oisin, the great dog, would soon be old, and with him his race would end. This time there would be no miracle, such as the meeting with the Islay man in Port Chester. There was just one chance in a hundred, and that was to find Campbell, the poet, in Canada, on the off chance that he might have a slut to breed. It took half a year before he located his man, and even then he wasn't sure it was he, at Port Caledon in Nova Scotia. He took part of his savings and travelled thither the summer the German war broke out. And his heart fell when Campbell was pointed out to him, a lean, high-bred country gentleman, with a golfer's shoulders and a horseman's knees.

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"Are you Mr. Campbell, the poet?"

"Campbell, the poet, by the grace of God, I am."

"Then you have some dogs. An Islay man of Port Chester in America told me."

"That would be Alec Murray," Campbell remembered; "he had a lady of the Alan Dhu breed."

"I got a dog out of her, and I thought maybe you'd do me the favour to let me get a whelp by him out of one of your dogs."

"Man alive"—Campbell's eyes were hard—"you're from the wrong part of Ireland. Why for should I do you a favour?"

Old Shawn's heart sank. He groped for the Gaelic of his youth: "*Clann nan Gaedhel guala re cheile*," he pleaded. "Children of the Gael shoulder to shoulder. Will you hear my story?"

"A poem lasts longer than a great tree." The Gaelic had softened Campbell. "And a good story is a meal for a king. Come into the house, good man, and let's have your tale."

"I've just one left," he said when he heard Mahoney's history, "a two-year-old that's never been mated. I'm off to the war next week, so I'll give her to you. For the sake of an Irishwoman I once knew when I was a young fellow, I'm giving you the dog. Paraig," he called, "put the couples on Mairi Lea. I'm letting her go with this man from Ireland. . . ."

The war went on, and then came the lightning of Easter week in Ireland, and for a week old Shawn

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Mahoney hardly slept. They were fighting in Dublin streets, and he wasn't there. He wrung his hands, and about him Oisin and Mairi Lea clustered, and Mairi's pup, Cuchulain, clawed at his knees in silent sympathy.

Then came days of horror: the rebellion crushed ruthlessly under foot, the leaders executed or thrown into prison and, what was worse, the clamour against the rebels for disloyalty to England.

"How could they be disloyal?" Shawn said bitterly. "They were never loyal."

Nor was this the end of the saddest of weeks. Mairi Lea was killed by a racing taxicab, and an English resident of New Rochelle patriotically poisoned Oisin. Passing the store, he fed the great hound a piece of liver with two needles thrust into it. And Oisin's death was terrible. . . .

But Cuchulain, the very last of the great breed, thrived and grew from awkward puppyhood into magnificent prime, and as he grew so arose from the ashes of revolution the phoenix of Irish freedom. The dead of Easter week clamoured, and their mute and terrible tongues awoke young Ireland to white wrath. There was no longer romantic warfare in the hills, a child at the mercy of a son of Anak. There was a silent duel to the death, a pitting of brains and purpose, and suddenly Ireland was all but free. Cuchulain the magnificent, the king of dogs, raised his head. And Shawn Mahoney, white-headed, weeping, paraphrased the cry of the Hebrew matron of old:

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*Shall I of a surety see Ireland free, which am old ?
Is anything too hard for the Lord ?*

A week later, for the second time in his life, he passed Sandy Hook. His ticket had been purchased quietly, and none who might have seen him would ever have thought that here were the finishing couplets of a great romance: this old, very old man with the great dog. Down in the second-class cabin he sat in a deck chair and watched the great Atlantic wallow by unchanged since the day his countryman, St. Brendan, had sailed to America centuries before Columbus—so goes the story old Gaelic-speaking tellers say by the turf fires of Connacht and Kerry and Donegal, when the harvest is gathered, and cold comes on the land.

The steamer, a great English liner, was to touch at Queenstown before proceeding to Liverpool, and there were no Irish in the second cabin. All were Americans or English, and old Shawn had no words for them nor they for him. What could there have been, anyway, between the young, merry voyagers and the old man knocking on the portals of death? In the morning and evening he would have the big hound up from his quarters and sit with him on the forward deck, waiting patiently until the green hills of Kerry should arise in the east.

The only one that spoke to him was the chief engineer, a heavy Scot with a low, soft voice and an eye like chilled steel.

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"That's a grand dog you've got, mister!" He strolled forward and sat on the hatch beside the old man. He patted the dog's head and Cuchulain nuzzled his knees. "The only man I knew ever had a dog like that was a man from my country, Campbell of Kilchoman, the Islay poet, him that went to Nova Scotia and was killed in France."

"He's killed, you say?" Shawn took off his hat. "God be good to him, he was good to me. He gave me the mother of this dog."

"He must have liked you well——"

"Listen, young man, are you very fond of the English?"

"My forefathers weren't," the engineer laughed. "They liked this tune"—and he whistled "The White Cockade," the Stuart melody—"better than this": and he gave a few bars of "Rule Britannia."

"Black hell to their souls! I've got a story to tell you——" (The engineer listened with his eyes on the hound.) "And to think that in a few hours you say, my friend, the dog and I'll be in Ireland. I could cry, that's what I could, and I will——"

"But, mister——" The chief looked at him in dismay.

"What is it?"

"Didn't you know——"

"Know what?"

The navigator came trotting down the steps from the bridge. "Land ahead, chief."

"Where? Where? Oh, my Ireland! Where?" Old Shawn staggered to his feet.

"Off the port bow you'll see it soon." He left

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the white-haired rebel and the dog and strolled aft. Amidships he met the doctor.

"I see you've been talking to Mahoney. I wonder why the steamship agents sell tickets to people like that—you don't know the minute they'll die. I didn't think he'd live to land."

"Poor old fellow!" the chief said. "He thinks he's going ashore with the dog."

"Did you tell him?"

"I hadn't the heart."

"You hadn't the heart!" the doctor laughed. "You! The worst-hated engineer on the seas. Slave Driver Stuart! You hadn't the heart!"

"That's just it. I hadn't the heart!"

So all morning and all afternoon the ship forged along, past the Blaskets, past Bantry Bay, past Cape Clear, past Clonakilty, past Kinsale. Toward evening she swung into Cork harbour and dropped anchor off Queenstown. The purser came to old Shawn as he was collecting his belongings in his cabin. "Old man, about the dog——"

"What about him?" Old Shawn threw his head up proudly.

"You're not thinking of taking him ashore?"

"Of course I'm taking him ashore."

"Ha-ha! That's rich. Lor' love a duck! That's good. Didn't you know, didn't you, that he's got to be in quarantine for six months at half a crown a day? I'll trouble you for a hundred and thirty-four dollars."

"Six months!"

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“Come along. Get a move on!”

Old Shawn was all a-tremble. He saw the chief engineer pass the door.

“Young fellow, Mr. Stuart!” he called. The chief came through the cabin door. “Is this true—that the hound has to go in quarantine for six months—before he can land?”

“It’s the law, Mr. Mahoney. It’s very hard, but it’s the law.”

“The good old British law,” the purser chanted. “It mayn’t go with the rebels in Ireland, but it goes aboard this ship——”

The chief swiveled his chilled-steel eye toward him. His mouth closed.

“Six months! I won’t live that long. And the dog in the hands of the stranger!”

“You know if you haven’t got the money the dog will be killed.”

“I think”—the old man gulped—“we’d better go back to America, the dog and I. To be so near and to go away again—that’s hard.”

“I hope you have your fare back!”

“If he hasn’t, I have,” Stuart snapped.

“I take it very kindly of you Mr. Stuart, but I’ve got sufficient for my needs. Now, if you don’t mind——”

The chief showed the purser before him out through the cabin door.

The liner was not to pull out until the tide turned, and that would be two in the morning. The soft Irish night had set in now, and most of the passengers

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had gone to their cabins in preparation for the morrow's landing in Liverpool. Through the dark the lights of Queenstown pier glimmered like near stars. The chief engineer strolled forward on the hurricane deck. He came across the second officer leaning over the rail.

"What do you know, chief?" the navigator hailed him. "The Sinn Fein have taken the admiralty pier and their volunteers are patrolling it. God, man, they'll soon be demanding passports."

"Right there at the pier."

"They've taken down the Union Jack and run up the rebel flag!"

"Ah, well! Times change."

Around the hurricane deck came a trio of voyagers laughing, two girls with a man between them, conversing in high-pitched cockney accents.

"So help me, the old bounder's sitting on the hatch downstairs crying his silly old chump off, and so help me, his tyke's crying too. W'at a lark!"

"Serve him right, I s'y. An old Irish mick and his mutt——"

The navigator shook his head. "Poor old beggar," he murmured.

"So that's the way you feel about it!" the chief jeered. "I forgot you were Irish."

"I'm no' Irish. I'm Ulster Scotch," the Antrim man snapped. "I'd rather be crippled nor Irish, but—I'd rather be dead nor English." The bridge bell sounded. "My watch." He turned to go.

"Willie John." The navigator turned in surprise. It was seldom the dour chief used a man's given

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name. "Keep a good watch for'a'd to port the night."

"Why for?"

"You might see the sea serpent, y' ken, and you'd get a medal for that from the Geographical Society. At any rate, don't mind t'other side."

The departing engine-room watch were surprised to see the chief swinging down the ladder. Usually they were free from the visits of Simon Legree when at anchor. Black, gigantic, muscled like Titans, they regarded him with the hot, reined-in animosity of jungle folk.

"The finest bunch of thugs and cut-throats this side of the clinkers of hell," he said, not without pride. "Well, men, there's very little love lost between us."

The stokers approved his reflection in grim silence.

"There's a bloody sight less since you tried to put me in the furnace two voyages ago."

The firemen grinned. Only for the third's quick and accurate shooting there'd have been a vacancy for chief engineer.

"So you think it strange I came down here to ask a favour of you?" They glowered at him. "This has nothing to do with the ship," he explained. "As a matter of fact, it's a jailing business." They looked up interestedly. Their faces cleared. "At any rate, I'll accept the responsibility."

"Ah, t'ell with the responsibility," some one growled. "Shoot."

"Well, here goes. There's an old man above

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with a dog. They won't let him ashore without the dog going into six months' quarantine. And he won't leave the dog. So he's chosen to go back to America and take the dog with him. He's been waiting to come back here for forty years or more. Now, here's the favour I want you to do for me. Man the lifeboat on the starboard quarter, after dark, and bring him to the Queenstown pier. Give him and the dog to the Sinn Fein officer. He's an old rebel and they'll take care of him. Will you do it?"

A New York fireman stepped forward. "Cheese, chief! They ain't one of us wouldn't cut your heart out and feed it to th' dogs, but, Cheese! a favour. D'at's a different t'ing. Sure we will."

"Good boys. Now, easy does the trick. No noise. If you get into a scrap, no noise either. Use spanners or a slicing bar. Get him ashore. . . ."

A fireman collected the gear from Mahoney's stateroom, to the horror of a steward with a choked gullet. The chief touched old Mahoney on the shoulder. He and the dog looked up.

"Mr. Mahoney, come on. Get into this boat quick. And bring the dog. You're going ashore in Ireland."

"Don't joke me, sonny, Mr. Stuart. I'm an old man."

"I'm not joking you." He pointed to the boat ready to swing out, the men at the oars, the crew at the davits.

"These boys will take me ashore—to Ireland?"

"They'd take you to hell and back again, for the

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matter of that." He helped him in, and a couple of stokers lifted the dog after him.

"Sure, 'tis like the ould days, the boat in the night time."

"Good-bye, sir. Good-bye, Cuchulain. Swing her out."

"The blessing of God and Mary and St. Patrick and St. Brigid be on you all your days, on you and yours——"

"Thank you, sir. Let her go. . . ."

He took a turn or two around the deck before lying down for a few hours. Abaft the smoking room he ran full tilt into the purser. "I'm hunting for that old Fenian and his dog," the purser complained querulously. "I can't seem to lay a hand on them."

"I hope you find them," the chief laughed. Something in his tone made the purser look at him keenly. Then suddenly from Queenstown pier came a burst of cheering, peal upon peal of welcome and triumph, and through it ran a deep full note of the great hound's joyous belling. The purser became incoherent with fury.

"It was you. You did it," he accused the chief. "I'll report it. I'll report you——"

"Report and be damned, you spavined jackass!"

The chief had had enough of the air. He turned in for the night. He took his tunic off with difficulty, for the shrapnel of Jutland still pained his left shoulder. "Well, Alec, when you get out of jail you can get a job in the Irish Navy," he told himself.

THE HOUND OF IRELAND

He took his watch out to wind it. "That'll be some job for you, my lad!"

As he put it under his pillow the light caught the small bronze Maltese cross attached to his fob, and shone on the letters of the decoration:

For Valour

II

FIDDLER'S GREEN

IT must have been the Norsemen brought it to Ireland—that old legend of Fiddler's Green. There is nothing Christian in it; and it lacks the subtle, spiritual twilight of Gaelic paganism. They must have left it behind them when Boru, the King, drove them into the sea in Dublin—as they left behind them the secret of the heather ale, and the red-headed people of the hills.

“I had it off my father a long time syne, in the year that Bonaparte died,” I was told by Padraig Dall O’Conor, who is the oldest man I know. “There is a race of dark people in the world, and they step from the right road of life, and they go all their way in a bypath. And down and down they travel, through whins and briars and big stones, and great terrors on the way, and shapes about them, and Death stalking them in a red cloak and with a black axe, until they come to the open doors of hell.

“And the dark people go in through the doors of hell, and they travel along the burning roads, and they climb the fiery gates and the flaming hedges. And many of them lie down there, and an end comes on them. But there’s others go through the

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whole ways of it until they come to the other side of it. And on the other side of hell there's Fiddler's Green.

"And a great peace comes on them, and great contentment; and the dark people become like the white people, like Your Honour's self, and like me, that never did a day's harm in my life. A great place it is, Fiddler's Green, with the fiddlers fiddling and the pipers piping, and a power of hounds tracking the hare through the furze. Great happiness from the dawning of the day until the moon rises; drinking with due sobriety; fine women to marry and little childer on the floor. A great place surely!"

"It mayn't be right now, as I'm giving it to you. It mayn't be right; but I'm telling it as I had it of my father, and him an ancient man. . . ."

I

HE finished the last drop of his coffee and polished the last morsel off his plate with a sort of fierce ravenousness. He bit the end from a cigar and put it in his mouth. There was something clumsy and uncertain in his manner of lighting it, as in the manner of a novice. He gave a short grunt. "Good to be out!"

He shook his head. There was a great muscularity in his tones. They suggested, somehow, the muted throbbing of drums. The buxom, handsome amazon opposite him nodded. There was a mist of tears in her hard, bright eyes.

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Slowly circling, savouring every little detail, the eyes of the giant Swede swept over the garish apartment. The hideous red-plush rocking-chairs and divan, and the violent brazen glitter of the electric chandelier, impressed him as a child might be impressed by the lavish trappings of a king's palace. The garish reproductions on the wall—Daniel in the Lions' Den, and Cherry Ripe, and an atrocity of Rossetti's—all these he gazed on open-mouthed and awe-stricken, as an amateur of art might stand stunned in the Borghese Palace. The air shaft of the apartment house, with the March sunshine whipping down it like a searchlight, hard and brilliant; even the garbage can on the fire escape opposite—all these he examined lengthily, unbelievingly. These were the evidences of liberty.

His ear gulped greedily at the sounds without. The rhythmic thud of the overhead down Sixth Avenue and the grinding of its brakes as it slowed up at Fourteenth Street; the savage clanging of street cars as they pounded their way through the traffic; the languid notes of a singing bird imprisoned in a cage; the impertinent squawking of a parrot near by; the husky notes of a street singer; the susurrus of shoppers all about, live, bubbling, like the fermenting of grapes in a vat—all these were to him what the chirming of birds and the burgeoning of the fig trees, the pleasant vineyards and the blue hills of Dan were to Lazarus, whose dwelling for a time had been where the dead are.

She touched her broad bosom and looked at him.

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"I've got your bank book here." Her voice had the crisp, slipped note of the New Yorker. "Seventeen thousand and more there was in it; and interest for four and a half years makes it near twenty."

"You didn't use it?" he said with the rising inflection of astonishment. "What did you do?"

"Oh, I lifted at the department stores, and jumped in occasionally with a loft mob. I made out all right."

"Ryan, the yegg, told me, up the river, you were working the badger. I told him he was a liar!"

She looked steadily at Olsen and a snort of contempt came from her fine nostrils.

"Liar was right!"

She moved over to a couch and swung the movable top up.

"Look," she told him; "I've kept all your things—sectional jemmy and brace and all."

He stood up and went over to her, a great hulking giant of a man, six feet and three inches of height to him, and broad as a great door. The huge shoulders seemed muscle-bound; but the hands were big and firm, and bunched with sinew, flossed over from wrist to finger joints with a down of whitish-golden hair. Over the bull neck, which might have been a wrestler's, so massive and firm it was, the broad jaw sprang out firmly, but with no hint of truculence. The mouth was broad, and there was a shadow on it of what four and a half years ago had been a humorous grin. There was a queer elongation at the tip of the long broad nose that suggested in a faint way the snout of a pike. The eyes of him, blue like

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ice, had something drowsy and good-humoured about them. One could imagine him driving a team of Percheron horses; or, clad in overalls, pottering about a great dirigible; or tramping the bridge of a liner in a second mate's watch.

"I'm through with the brace and jemmy"—he shook his head and smiled—"and the dynamite and the glycerine."

She looked at him with a startled sense of astonishment. Tall and, for a woman, built on as heroic lines as he, she seemed an ideal mate for him. Her black hair was drawn straight away from her head; her fine, regular features, a little too rounded perhaps; her black eyes, certainly too hard for a woman of twenty-eight; her full, red, shapely mouth would have elicited admiration anywhere. A fine woman, one would have said, paying in that one cant phrase tribute to the mould and features of her and the splendid spirit within. He seemed, somehow, like a great broadsword, passive in its scabbard, but terrible in battle; she was a keen rapier blade, always ready, always tense, prepared to feint, parry and thrust home mortally.

"What do you mean?" she whipped at him.

"I mean," he said solemnly, "I blow no more safes."

"What is it, Jörn?" Her tone was casual. "Did you get cold feet?"

"No."

"Did you get religion up the river?"

He shrugged his huge shoulders and laughed a little.

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"No; I got no religion up the river."

She dropped the cover of the couch and looked at him squarely.

"What is it, then?"

"It's bad business, Belle," he said. "It's no good. Bad business."

"What are you aiming to do?"

"I think," he answered slowly, "I think I go soon to Long Island and buy a farm."

"And what about me?"

"You come too, Belle."

She looked away from him for an instant, and then suddenly began a quick, nervous pacing of the room, stopping here and there to pick up some little object and put it down again—an uncontrollable functioning of muscles actuated by anger. She stopped and gazed straight at him, her hands clenched by her sides.

"So I'm to go down to the country, am I? And live on a farm? Was it for this I waited four and a half years? To bury myself in some living cemetery in the country? Look at me, I say!" She tensed her superb presence toward him and her eyes flashed. "Belle Folioott in the country, looking after the pigs and chickens! Jörn Olsen, are you mad?"

"I go to the country," he maintained doggedly.

She was silenced for a few instants. Her tones grew normal.

"You'll be all right in a few days, old boy," she said. "You'll think differently. I was wrong to talk that way. You need a while to pull yourself together."

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"I quit it!" Olsen shook his head. "Business is bad."

"You'll be all right, old boy. Morris Sachs, the finder, is round. He'll be in to see you. And O'Flaherty, the back-door man—he's itching to be at the old game again; and you and I at the safe door. You can't get away from it, Jörn. The good old days! Do you remember the time when we broke the safe at Patchogue and you helped the Irish policeman chase the burglars in the automobile—and the stuff underneath the seat? And do you remember how they thanked you?"

He smiled a little at the recollection of that glorious foray; and, encouraged by that, she pleaded again:

"And do you remember how you looted the purser's safe on the Grosser Kurfürst while the officer of the bridge was proposing to me, and the night watchman was ordered below to make coffee for me because the night was cold? And the Porto-Rican planter's at Aguadilla? Do you remember the champagne breakfast we had there and the receipt you left him for the money? Ah, Jörn—and you're quitting it all!"

The smile left his mouth, and the fiercely dogged expression came on it again.

"I am!" he told her; and, somehow, she knew it was irrevocable.

She turned away from him, and again she began her round of the room, picking up little objects and setting them down again; and now it was an aimless, blind sort of action, as though she did not know what her fingers were doing. There was a convulsive

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movement at her throat, and in her eyes a dull film of tears. Her head drooped weakly over her broad, deep bosom. Presently she turned about, and her head was high.

"Well, old pal"—by some miracle her voice was light and bantering—"it's the straight and thorny for you; but for me it's the crooked way, the primrose. It's in my blood, I guess, and it won't go out. I suppose you'll grow side whiskers and go to church. Good luck to you, old boy!" Her voice broke just the slightest degree, as the voice of a singer might quaver uncertainly in taking a note. "But you won't forget the old moll altogether, will you?"

II

There is something in these Norsemen that appals one. They are big physically and, I feel big spiritually. I continually get the impression that each of them has, for lack of a better term, an immortal soul; and that particular possession I flat-footedly deny to four-fifths of the population of this planet.

There is the memory of the Vikings, who went down to the sea in their great galleys, and who harried Europe from their own nook-shotten shores to the placid beach of Africa, their helmets flashing, their broadswords swinging, their huge axes whistling through the air like the swish of a whip, their throats belling like a great hound's when the fighting madness came on them. There is the memory, too, of

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the great dead fighters who were laid on their flaming galleys and wafted out to sea on their journey to the majestic Valhalla of heroes, where there is ever great carousal, and the singing of sagas, and the clang of armour as Thor and Odin move on their gigantic thrones.

There is something, too, about the womenfolk of the Norsemen that is hard to understand. Great-limbed, superb, independent as strong men, they always give the impression of being more mates than mothers. Their children are cared for, their houses spotless; but they are ever ready to leave house and child and follow the man of their choice to the precipice that is at the end of the world. They are never household drudges, as other women might be, and there is no sense of pawky maternity about them. Great spirits they have, and a great life in them.

In this connection I mention Olga Olsen, mother of Jörn. Of his father I can gather little—a cold, dour man, he told me, whose religion was the peopled twilight of Swedenborg, and whose daily bread was earned as foreman in the Brooklyn shoe factory of a compatriot. He died when Jörn was six years old. His mother, for three years, subsisted on a small restaurant, which the savings of her husband enabled her to buy. When Jörn was nine—she was not thirty then—she met, was wooed by and promptly proceeded to follow the Christiania captain of a Luckenback freighter. The captain was a decent man; but he had an understandable objection to evidence of a former attachment of his wife's in the person of a husky youngster of nine. To Olga the

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matter was perfectly simple. She quietly dropped the child and went her romantic way.

"And why not?" Jörn Olsen used to defend her. "I was strong and healthy. She had her own life to live. A young woman yet! Why not?"

There is something about a healthy young child animal of nine that rejoices the heart. There was no lack of women and men to take care of Jörn; but in that none too rich and shrewd-headed community there was no place for reckless benevolence. They housed him and looked after his physical welfare, but they saw to it, also, that he earned his living by various small jobs, such as the carrying of workmen's pails and the running of their errands; and from the small emolument these activities carried they deducted a fair sum for his upkeep.

Passed the years, and in the big ironworks that hedge the dreary Gowanus Canal and the desolate forest of Erie Basin he obtained a job. Passed more, and he became a mechanic's helper. Just a few minutes, it seemed—just a few reels in that whirring kaleidoscope called life—and lo! Jörn Olsen was a full-fledged mechanic, a member of a union, an associate master of the guild, and not yet twenty-three.

Kilgour, the husky Scotch manager from the Clyde, scenting a big contract from afar, and canny as a "cotsman is of discontent among the labourers, was going over with the owner a list of mechanics who ought to be made foremen should the contract realise.

" . . . And there's the young Swede, Olsen," Kilgour suggested. "He's a gey wonder!"

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"That kid!" snorted Forde, the owner, a pot-bellied, red-faced, sententious dog from Westmeath. "He's getting too much as it is. What does he want to do—run the place?"

All this, Kilgour, with the tact of a Scotsman, which is none at all, recounted to Jörn Olsen. Olsen only laughed.

"Well, he's the boss!" Olsen laughed; that easy laugh of his which was like relaxed muscles rippling in harmony.

"Oh, aye! He may be the boss, young fellow," was Kilgour's independent criticism; "but, still and all, he's a damned fool."

In that hard, practical school in which Jörn Olsen had been reared there had been inculcated into him the healthy practical morality of the workshop. Of religion he had little or none—the cold rhapsodies of the gaunt Svensk pastor to him were unrealities. He knew by intuition—it was born in him—that cheating and lying and thieving were wrong.

They were worse than wrong; they were contemptible. The code of the workmen, a straight and inflexible honesty towards one another, was as clear cut as a Norman's code towards his peers. Blame his training, blame anything you will, but the vast ethic conceptions were unknown to him. The complicated mosaic of the morals of society he was unaware of, and cared less for them than for the ping of a hammer on a bolt.

His attitude towards his fellow mechanics of the works was that of one strong man toward others. His attitude towards Forde, the red-nosed owner,

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was one of unqualified contempt. His huge, sinewed frame revolted before the flabby tissue of the older man. He liked his work—the mastery of iron and steel, and the plotting against skilful mechanism; so in him there was nothing but contempt for the pot-bellied rogue who took his pleasure in fuddling himself with Irish whisky at the Hole in the Wall, or devouring from the front row of the Star the withered charms of burlesque ponies and the adipose limbs of the show girls.

There obtained work at the Gowanus Ironworks, of Brooklyn, one Marco Paroni, a skilled mechanic; and one Morris Sachs, an efficient clerk. The tall, spare Italian, with the bushy brows, the gaunt face, the hairy simian arms and the taciturn disposition, seemed to watch Olsen with the contemplative look of an employer probing a prospective trusted employee.

He noted with satisfaction the deft wizardry of Olsen's touch among the great machines, and the tremendous sinews that drove home a bolt with the force of a trip hammer, or could tear aside a metal section, as though it were cardboard. The Italian appeared to like the discussion of social problems.

"That contemptible gin hound"—so he characterised the owner, "what right has he to the money we sweat and make for him? Is it right that we work that he drink and dress his big carcass in diamonds? Son of a dog! I ask you! Is it right?"

"Don't seem so," Olsen would argue; but there was an emphasis in his eyes that belied the casual nature of his words.

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Sachs, the clerk, an undersized, shrewd-eyed Ghetto product, with something about him that suggested a ferret, had always a welcoming smile for the great Swede when he came into the office.

It happened on a fine April morning that Olsen found himself in the office with Paroni; both had come to get some trifling information about a piece of work from Kilgour, the manager. Kilgour happened to be out, and Sachs, the clerk, was the only person in. The Italian was looking at the big green safe, with its gaudy gold letters: Gowanus Ironworks: Michael J. Forde. He smiled as he turned to Olsen.

"Oughtn't to be hard to get that open," he grinned.
"Hell! No!" Olsen laughed contemptuously.

The Italian slued round on him quickly. The smile was no longer on his face. His eyes were levelled at Olsen's, keen and hard.

"Well, what about it?" he asked crisply.

The clerk leaned forward tensely. His mouth was slightly open. His ferret eyes were half closed.

"I don't care," Olsen laughed.

And so that night Jörn Olsen was initiated into the mysteries of safe breaking. He understood the functions of the finder, who was Morris Sachs, whose business it was to get all possible information about the layout of the land, when the proposition was at its safest, and when most money would be kept. He was introduced to Dave Ryan, a red-headed, stocky little scoundrel, whose work was to effect an entrance in the rear, and to open the front door for the cracksmen, and while the work was on to watch for possible interruptions. He was shown the

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great sectional jemmy, which is hung about the neck, and the brace, which is carried snugly between belt and crotch, and the shining panoply of minor implements which the hip pocket is filled with. And it was made known to him, also, why he was chosen as a member of this marauding company—because he was a skilled mechanic, because he seemed a dependable and fearless man, and because he was unknown as a criminal factor to the police.

"Well, I don't care," was his cheerful, casual acceptance of the whole situation. And he laughed chucklingly, as a boy might do at the prospect of some grotesque prank.

A night or two later they sneaked up to the iron-works, letting themselves in at the main entrance with the keys the wily Sachs had provided. The red-headed Ryan pried open a back window, twisting the bars with his Stillson wrench. The front door clicked open, and Olsen and Paroni slipped in. A neat hole drilled into the upper lefthand corner of the ornate safe; a fierce struggle with the wrenches; Olsen's tremendous shoulders bearing on the sectional jemmy; and in a cloud of dust and mortar the great safe was ripped open like the top of a sardine box.

"By golly!" was Olsen's only comment, accompanied by his light laugh. And again he laughed at the division of the spoil.

Then followed the rigid routine of the cracksman—the steady working in the plant to avert suspicion; the grim control over nerves. But in all that period—and during it he and Paroni, with their finder and

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attendant scout, managed a few other little jobs with the neatness and dispatch of finished workmen—in all that period a queer sense of humour made his working a whimsical joke, as though he were enjoying his part in some private theatricals.

It is hard to explain why Jörn Olsen adopted this. He had no need for money. He wasn't inclined to dissipation. There was no tangible reason for his looting safes. But there was one, an intangible one, very satisfactory to me. I see his outbreak as I see the roaming forays of the blond Vikings of old, crashing through the blue seas northward to harry Iceland and on their way southward to ravage the purple Latin hills. I see it as I see the outburst of the Red Danes when they drove through Anglia and fought, for the sheer love of fighting, with the kilted Gaels of Ireland. A queer sort of thing it is—the outbreak of a caged tiger; the freshness of a stalled horse: an itch of muscle and an itch of mind.

There circulated, with that queer wireless of the underworld, the intelligence that a new master cracksman had appeared low on the horizon and light, like a new moon. A great taciturn man, with the sensitive fingers of a violinist and the strength of Yussuf Hussane; daring, rapid, alert, a wizard of mechanism, as the story went. The safe squad at headquarters puzzled their brains about him; sent out their stool pigeons in a humming swarm, and swore softly when they returned without the slightest branch of news in their curved beak. Your big-safe men are the aristocrats of their profession. Their brains are active, as active as any policeman's. In

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the false perspective of rumour the tale was romantic; but the cold reality of fact was that, under Paroni's guidance, Jörn Olsen was topping his chosen profession.

Safe after safe was opened deftly, efficiently and silently, without mishap, until the unfortunate affair of Porthwaite & Son, the big instalment-furniture people. It was elected to break that safe on the first Saturday night of the month, when the drawers would be bulging with the payments made on Saturday evening by the honeymoon birds of the Bronx. It was three o'clock on a December morning when Ryan opened the front door for them. Paroni and Olsen slipped in. As they moved through the shadows, suddenly, like a ghostly apparition, appeared the grey-uniformed figure of the night watchman. Paroni cowered.

"Sh-ht!" Olsen's warning was like the faint chirrup of a newly hatched robin.

His hand shot out of the shadows like a snake's tongue, flicking. His lean fingers caught the watchman's larynx as deftly as though it were a tossed ball. Firmly they pressed on each side until the man's head went back, with the mouth open and the hands stretched out like rigid sticks. He let go for an instant and had him on his back, gagged with handkerchiefs in an eye's twinkling. He bound and trussed hands and feet, weaving knots as cannily as any sailor. He carried him over and laid him on a pile of carpets.

"You be all right," he said in his slurring, gentle tones. "Afterwards I call up the police,

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and they'll come and let you out. You just be comfortable."

Paroni was wiping the perspiration from his forehead. Already Paroni had twice seen the inside of a prison, and the faintest possibility of his return to one filled him with a fear greater than the fear of death.

They investigated the huge safe, Olsen tapping over it. The Swede turned and shook his head.

"Use the stick," he suggested.

The hole was drilled quickly above the lock and the dynamite inserted. From every quarter mattresses and carpets were brought to pile about the steel treasure box. At the corner of the office Paroni held the electric pocket battery, ready to turn on the current.

"Just a minute!" Olsen said.

He went towards the safe to adjust a mattress. The fear of the prison and the unexpected advent of the watcher had played on Paroni's nerve. He fiddled at the battery. Inadvertently he turned the switch. There was a muffled roar—and Olsen tottered and fell, laughed, tried to get up, failed, laughed again, grew very white in the face.

"By golly!" He managed to grin. "My leg!"

Indecision and nervousness dropped from Paroni like a cloak cast aside. Quicker than I take to write it he was outside, talking to Ryan.

"Get Sachs!" he ordered. "Get a closed car. Get her quicker'n hell! Get me?"

"Put all the stuff together," Olsen told him as he came back.

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"Damn the stuff!" Paroni swore. "Your leg's broke."

"You think I break a leg," Olsen laughed wanly, "and not have anything for it? You collect that stuff, Marco!"

Gently they carried him out and put him in the car. A muffled purr and they started southward.

"Can't take him to his place," Ryan puzzled.

"Damn it! We can't take him to a hospital," Paroni answered.

"We'll take him to Belle Foliott's," Sachs, the little finder, broke in. "She's a good sort and she'll take care of him. We'll bring him right down to her."

"Before you bring me anywhere," Olsen insisted, "you stop at a drug store and telephone the police about that poor bum I tied up. I don't want him to be there over Sunday. You do it, Marco."

And here, I must add, ends the career of Marco Paroni, master cracksman and decent misguided soul. When Jörn Olsen was lying abed, his bones knitting slowly together, a thin, quiet man, with spectacles, tapped the Italian on the shoulder. He was sentenced for a nearly forgotten burglary to fifteen years, it being his third offence. In Sing Sing he died. . . .

There was not, at the first time she met the Swedish cracksman, that calm dignity about Belle Foliott she had when Jörn Olsen emerged from Sing Sing. Tall, deep-bosomed, broad-hipped, magnificently curvilinear, there was already in her eyes that expression of shrewd and guarded wisdom which

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distinguished the mercenary captain from the knight at arms. She had gone through much.

There was that childhood of hers, sordid as sordidness can be. There were those few years in a musical comedy. There was the shooting by her of Jones, the hotel man, and her acquittal. There was her subsequent marriage to Irving Samson, gunman, loft thief and pickpocket, who was sent up for life for a too-ready use of a revolver, actuated by cocaine. Her whole life had been a guerrilla warfare. Her whole atmosphere had been one of moral malaria, in which she had sprung up like some splendid orchids and now into this atmosphere came Jörn Olsen, sweeping over it like a healthy salt-sea breeze.

"Oh, well; I guess I'll have to," she told Morris Sachs when he put the problem of the wounded cracksman before her. The hospitality of the underworld compelled her to agree to it; but she had little liking to see her pretty apartment, bought and furnished by blackmail and at the risk of dark prison cells, the abode of some whining, terror-stricken, uncleanly yegg. "Bring him up!" she said petulantly.

So they brought up the tall and mighty bulk of Jörn Olsen to the apartment of Belle Foliott; and there they left him, with relief in their faces. And to the surprise of Belle Foliott, instead of the man she had pictured, she found a cleanly athlete, with the unconscious courtesy of an ambassador, who deplored the trouble to which he was putting her; who, in place of whining with pain, laughed grimly at every twinge; who had the insistence to sit up and shave himself

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each morning; who seemed to care as little for the police as for a fly that might settle on his hand.

"I guess I be out of here in a few days," he told her after the doctor had set the leg and put the plaster cast on it; there was always in his mind that idea of intrusion.

"You stay where you are, and don't talk," she said with a gruff kindness that was unusual to her. She slapped the pillows into shape. "You'll get out when you're well again, and not before."

It was to some extent the mothering instinct in her, who had no tie in heaven or on earth; it was also the innate delicacy and courtesy of the man towards her—towards her who had known only the lecherous attentions of Jones, whom she had killed, and the scheming, mercenary quality of her husband, who had used her as a decoy for his thieving; and largely it was the great passionate being in her, whipped into flame by the image of the blond Norse giant—that and the queer sense of fair play and a square fighting ring, which she possessed, co-ordinating with the selfsame quality in him—all these factors and symbols united into a potent formula, which awakened in her something that approximated unto love.

I have met Belle Follett once or twice since her marriage last year. Because of that friendship between Jörn Olsen and myself—that inconspicuous friendship between an Irish squire and an ex-cracksman—she will tell me many things of those first days when they met. I tread delicately on that ground, for it is very sacred to her and to him who is my friend. It is not for me to wrench away the

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veil from this vari-coloured, diaphanous mystery, which may prevail equally among the submerged of the gutter and the elect of the land. That is sanctuary, and no decent man or gentlewoman would have me place a profane foot within it. . . . He was holding her hand—long, tapering, well-kept—in his sinewy fingers. Her head was drooping. In those long black eyelashes of hers were beads of tears, like dew sparkling in the filaments of a spider's web.

“We get married?” he suggested softly.

“But, my dear, we can't get married!” She raised her eyes and looked at him, and her heart in her bosom fluttered like a pigeon's wing. “My husband is still alive.”

For six months afterwards she lived in a sort of romantic glamour, aiding this bandit of a new world. Sachs, still the finder for the mob, operated in his quick, efficient way. The red-headed Ryan effected his rapid entrance and flung open the front doors with his theatrical air. But in place of Paroni there was by the side of Jörn Olsen, handing him deftly instrument after instrument, or snapping the little pocket battery, the figure of Belle Follett. At other times she waited outside in the automobile, watching for possible interruptions. On one or two parlous nights she saved the situation by quick wit—as on the evening when she held a patrolman flirting with her for a dubious half hour, with Olsen working steadily around the corner. There was too much sound common sense in her, or she might have imagined herself to be a Maid Marian of a newer

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Robin Hood, or as the gallant light of love to a gentlemanly highwayman, or as the grey-eyed doxie of an Irish rapparee.

But, no matter how she looked at it, she loved Jörn Olsen. There were no feminine wiles about her—that was not her way; no abandoned outbursts of affection; no maudlin sentimentalities. There was something comradely and mannish about her caring for him, and a fine reserve in it.

“You’re a great old kid, all right!” she would tell him. And behind that were the admiration and affection of which her bigness was capable. But she couldn’t phrase it otherwise. She was that sort of woman.

I don’t know how Jörn Olsen felt about it. I doubt that he knew whether he loved her or not. He took her, I incline to believe, as a heaven-sent phenomenon, which one doesn’t question—like sunshine or flowers. There was no rhapsody on his part; though, for a glance, for a word, he would have blasted out of this life any man who annoyed her. He was not given to introspection. Sufficient unto him was the occurrence of the day, whether it was Belle’s kisses, or the savour of danger, or the problem of complicated locks.

“Belle,” would be the only outburst he was capable of, and that delivered in his low, bantering tone, “you’re the prettiest woman in America!” But she could thrill to that as a lady of the Renaissance would have thrilled to a sonnet of Peter Ronsard’s. . . .

It might have been a word dropped inadvertently in a café, though that was improbable. It might

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have been the skilful tracking of the police, or the wily diplomacy of a stool pigeon pumping Morris Sachs. No matter what it was, the fact was patent. They were trapped.

The high racks and desks of the suburban post office rose on either side of them with the dim unreality of a theatrical setting. In the corner the iron safe lay, a huge cube, one of whose sides swung loosely open, inflated from the explosion like an alderman's paunch. Cement lay crumbled on the floor, as about an unfinished house. The circular spot of the electric torch jabbed into the recesses of the strong box, like the searchlight of a battleship probing a clump of trees. It snapped out suddenly. Ryan was whispering.

"It's a fair finish," he said. "There's three of them bearing down in front and one coming round in the back."

Belle whipped a minute revolver from her bosom. "Tchak!" Olsen murmured. He caught her hand. She put it away.

"Listen," he told Ryan. "Wrap Belle's scarf about this jemmy and tap the rear man on the head with it. Get Belle away." There was a fumbling at the front door.

"No! No!" she murmured fiercely.

"Do you hear me?" His voice had become as hard and cold as the metal on which he worked. "Hey! Wait a minute!" he shouted. "There's no use us all going up. You stay on the outside."

"I won't!" she snapped back at him.

There was a rattle at the door.

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"Rush her, Dave!"

"I won't be rushed," she said suddenly. "I'll go; and I'll be waiting outside for you." She pulled his head down and kissed him. "Good-bye, old boy!"

There was a crash of glass outside.

"Good girl!"

He walked slowly toward the front of the office and fumbled at the locks.

"It's all right!" Olsen told the police. He made his way fumblingly to the glass door. Outside, the officers looked at one another, puzzled. He flung it open. "Come in!" He waved his hand as though welcoming guests into his home.

Reilly, the lieutenant, stepped forward.

"What do you mean 'Come in'?" He had never before faced so imperturbable a prisoner as this.

"It's all right. Come in."

They followed him pell-mell toward the wrecked safe.

"Where's the rest of the gang?" Reilly demanded.

"What rest of gang?"

"Don't be a fool!" Reilly snorted. "Where's the others?"

"There's no others. I work by myself since Paroni went to jail."

The detective lieutenant strode to the back window.

"MacShane!" he bellowed. There was no answer. "MacShane?" He vaulted through the open back window. "Come here, you!" he roared at Olsen. He pointed to the limp form of the detective huddled

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beneath the casement. "How do you explain that?" He ran his hands over the man. "A crack on the bean," he decided. "Well, what about it?"

"Maybe," suggested Olsen innocently, "he bump his head against the wall in the dark."

There was a faint chugging of an automobile in the distance. It changed to a purring, as of a monstrous cat. It roared like a far-away train.

Reilly swore and turned to the cracksman: "Well, we got you, my son. And I'll give you a straight tip: It's up the river for yours!"

"I been always curious about up the river," Olsen replied stolidly. "I hear a lot about it. Maybe I like it there. Nice and quiet, with no policemen butting in."

"You son of a gun!" Reilly looked at him with a grin. "You son of a gun!" A note of amazement came into his tone, and mingled with it was the tone of a big admiration. "You son of a gun!"

III

For four and a half years—a five-year term for a third-degree burglary, with time manumitted for good behaviour—Jörn Olsen abode in the dreary prison house at Ossining. Suns set and moons rose. The dun evenings of autumn went and the pleasant snow of winter. Came the sapphire dusks of April—and July, hot as a great furnace. Four times went the cycle about, and a half turn. Dynasties changed and war raged, and life pulsed by and love

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fermented, in the world outside; but within was the stolid repetition of stolid days. As near death as possible that state is: "Without ale; without disputation," said a Gaelic poet, speaking of the Land that is not Life; "without the belling of the wolf-hound on the hills, or the wind upon the heather, or the slinking of the badger through the furze." . . .

There is this which is terrible about crime: There is a brief and parlous life, and then the death of the prison; another momentary spell, ghoul-ridden and ghost-haunted; and again a death; and comes repetition after repetition, until the ghastly travesty of living ends, and the corruptible body becomes corruption, and that which actuates it disappears. But there knowledge ceases.

Came the day when Jörn Olsen stood outside the walls, a free man—his huge shoulders huge as ever, but now muscle-bound where once they were supple and lithe; the smile gone from his face. There were others with him, also, newly risen, with the old problem of free will and pre-destination facing them like wolves. There were some blinking dazedly at the sun, like newborn infants; there were others savage and sullen, like unchained dangerous dogs; there were others with peace and glory on their faces, as on the faces of those who have been nigh unto Emmanuel.

He sat opposite a tall, thin, pale-faced man on the train down. Unconsciously he studied the small hands, the feet, the aquiline contours of his features, all the minute signs of race and breeding which the prison routine had been powerless to kill. The

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passenger looked at Olsen with a half-amused smile on his face.

"What have you been up for?" he asked suddenly, with that queer twitching of mouth and half opening of lips. "Taking a crack at a man?"

"No," Olsen replied slowly; "taking a crack at a safe."

"Oh, then you'll go up again!"

Olsen looked at the man, with his eyes half closed, his head on one side, like a pedigree dog puzzling out the expression on a human's face.

"Oh, I know!" laughed the other bitterly. "I've been up four times myself. And I expect to go up a few more before I'm through. I'll forge a few more names and you'll crack a few more safes, and we'll both be up again."

The Swede was looking with an intense interest at the man opposite. Like some dramatic throwback on a cinema screen, he saw his own youth—his desertion by his fancy-free mother; the harsh work of the foundry; the limited horizon of his ambitions and dreams. And this man! The wastage, he thought in his shrewd mind—the wastage of background and the wastage of education and training! He felt a little bitter. If only he—

"When you look at it," the forger continued, "the percentage of it makes you laugh. A year's high jinks and five years in the pen. Reckon up your year's high balls and meals against the dirty water and the stinking food in the prison, and see where you come out."

There was sense in that, certainly; but somehow

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this mere mercantile view of the matter did not move Olsen extraordinarily.

"A man wasn't born to be a jail-bird," the forger exploded. "I'd rather be a labourer on a farm, with a couple of kids and a good thick girl for a wife, find a chance of living without a policeman always hunting you round, getting up in the morning for your day's work and going to bed tired after it, than be the cleverest crook in America. That's life!"

"Why don't you?" Olsen asked.

"Why don't we?" The forger laughed sardonically. "We come out ready to go straight. We fall in with one of the women we knew—and the first thing is the old game again. You may hold off for a while, but they'll get you going in the end." He swore bitterly. "There's not one of them would help you out and put you on the right way. Not a damned one!"

He looked out at the green Westchester country, dew-spangled, flowery, alive with birds. Again came his vitriolic laugh.

"Oh, you'll be up here again! Don't worry!"

"Maybe so," Olsen agreed. "Maybe so."

But his jaw had taken a firm tilt, and there was something in his eyes that burned in a steady blue flame.

IV

Within the huge station at Thirty-third Street people were coming and going in queer crisscrosses that suggested the intricate evolution of troops.

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The coloured porters, with their red caps, fluttered hither and thither like strange tropical birds. The hollow tones of the megaphone reverberated to the high-domed ceiling. There was the deep clang of bells. There was the grinding of wheels.

"Then, when you get down to Long Island"—Belle Follett was speaking—"you've got to forget all this. And the best way you can do it is to get married and have some kids. It's the only way!"

Olsen was looking at her, with pain in his eyes.

"Forget it!" she commanded bluntly. "There was nothing between you and me. We were only pals."

"Wading River Express!" came the ghostly note of the megaphone. "Huntington; Cold Spring Harbour——"

"There's your train." He leaned forward to kiss her. "Cut out the mush, Jörn." She shook his hand as a man would. "Good-bye, old boy; and remember—wife and kids."

She marched stiffly across the concourse and gained the street. Aimlessly she wandered down towards Ninth Avenue. She turned suddenly into a doorway marked Family Entrance. She slumped into a chair in the dingy sitting-room. Her hands fell limply on the table.

"Oh, hell!" she breathed savagely. And then she laughed. "Bring me some brandy," she told the frowzy waiter. "Not a pony—a drink!"

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v

I was running back from Bridgeport in the Barnacle Goose; slow work, sailing full and by. The slim thirty-two footer was cutting through the swell like a plough turning up a furrow. An early June gale had lashed the Sound into a seething caldron the day and night before, and I had lain over in the Connecticut town, on the way home from the Brooklyn yacht yard, to give it time to abate. A very clear sky, with the water blue as ice, with a curling white foam like the snarl of a dog. Old Field Point rose up before us, and little by little the dun breakwater of Port Jefferson appeared. The wind freshened off land suddenly. Young Patrick, eighteen, blond, lank, sometimes caddie for me, sometimes mate of the sloop, was lying forward, coiled up between jib and mainmast.

"We'll take a reef," I decided.

We lay to and knotted the reef points; hauled on the halyards.

"Take in the foresail and put on the spitfire jib!" I shouted.

We cut into Mount Sinai, scuppers down. The long cross-tacking had put me out a matter of hours, and already the full force of the neap tide was pouring through the inlet like a stream from a fire hose. The deep, shell-strewn channel seemed to flash before us like a flying belt. Puffs of wind struck at us like the jabs of a boxer's glove. On the right was the sandy white beach. On the left, a flurry of blue water,

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where the tide met the waves of the Sound. In an eye flash I saw a great figure in flannel shirt and riding breeches, standing ashore, watching the fight. But I had no time to look at him. I was too busy at the tiller.

"Keep an eye out forrard," I told young Patrick. "I don't want to rip the bottom off her."

He crawled over the starboard bow.

"Not a chance," I decided. "Got to stand out. Hard a-lee!"

He may not have heard me; or the quick swirl of the boat may have taken him unawares. My own eyes were fixed on the pocket of the sail. So I noticed nothing until I heard a yelp and saw young Patrick being swept out by the current as a leaf is swept along by the wind. The Barnacle Goose flew down before the wind on the tide like a racing car. As I swept by I reached out; missed young Patrick by an inch; then threw overboard a life belt; saw it whirled along before it ever reached him. I came about. There was a hundred yards between us; and I saw young Patrick go down for the first time.

"Good-bye, old Barnacle Goose!" I said.

There was nothing to do but let her pound to pieces on the shore. I stood up to dive. "Stay where you are!"

Across the channel, tearing through it in a flurry of foam like a power launch, went the man who had been standing on the beach. I am a fairly powerful swimmer myself; but I had yet to see anything like the way those great arms crashed through the water, like the paddles of a ferryboat, and the legs churned

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like a propeller. I saw him reach young Patrick. I saw the lad's frenzied, terrified attempt to catch the man by the arms. I saw the swimmer's left arm shoot out and catch the boy's neck. I saw the right whip overhand out of the water and the fist land flush on the jaw. Leisurely he swam towards the boat, easily as a porpoise, towing young Patrick. I helped them in. The swimmer swung into the cockpit, hardly even panting.

"If you had gone overboard after him she'd have been pounded to bits," he said in a low, gentle voice. His eye went appreciatively over the graceful lines of the Barnacle Goose—the rake of the mast; the snug set of the sails. "It would have been a pity. Such a bonny sloop!"

And so I met Jörn Olsen.

VI

In that fertile wooded country on Long Island where the meadows roll downward to the sea like gigantic green velvet carpets; where the trees stand about in ordered clumps, as in the landscapes of some painter of a bygone school; where the Sound washes the shore with a chiming swish of water and a grinding of pebbles, Jörn Olsen had bought himself a farm. To the right of the reaches of his forty-acre holding swept a sedulously kept summer colony—a baroque atrocity of English cottages, of Italian villas, of colonial houses, huddled pell-mell. Across the Sound rose faintly the fertile green Connecticut

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hills. But hedged about by a belt of great trees—poplars, and ancient oaks, and spreading horse-chestnuts—the Olsen farm was hidden securely as the Lost Oasis of the Sahara wastes.

It was once a great farming country, that section; but the gangrene of discontent had set in, the blood of the farming stock thinning, and that bubble which is called a real-estate boom rising transparent and varicoloured from the pipes of their imagination, the owners of the land decided to hold it for speculation. A farmer's life was the life of a dog, they decided. Better to wait until the city people bought up the countryside for their bungalows and country houses; and then—heigh-ho!—for the city, a snug flat on Amsterdam Avenue, with a gas range, and glass handles on the doors, and a vaudeville show or a moving-picture palace, belike, round the corner. That was life—not vegetation!

But that snug holding which later became Olsen's was not easily disposed of. It was too much for one country summer estate; and for a colony, as they like to dub themselves, the summer cottagers decided it was unsuitable. It was not near enough to a shallow bathing beach with life lines and a raft; not near enough to the bar of a country club; not near enough to a moving-picture show. So, for a song, it became the property of Jörn Olsen; and it followed out the destiny the Great Gardener had decreed for it—lengthened out into flower-topped potato ridges; rose here and there into pygmy forests of bearded corn; budded for ten acres into a kitchen garden tended by two immobile Chinese, whose limp blue

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blouses and pagoda-like hats were the sensation of the village.

Here, a gnarled orchard was petalled in delicate white and pink hummed with the minute bourdon of bees. Up the hill, near the gigantic zareba of oaks and chestnuts, grazed two comfortable Guernseys and a sleek Belted Dutch cow. The old homestead, a huge relic of colonial days, built solidly as a fortress is built for a siege, panelled with curious, secret gun racks, nestled on a lawn that ran down to the water. And back of it—a crazy idea of Olsen's own, which curiously was successful—stretched an alley of greenhouses, where roses were grown for the winter market.

"Thinks he can farm, does he?" cackled the community wiseacres. "Well—by Jiminy!—he ain't the first one. No, sir; he ain't the first one to go bust. 'Fools rush in where angels'—"the delicate compliment those whiskered old scoundrels paid themselves—"fear to tread!"

Passed a year, and the unparalleled news went about that the Swedish giant was making money on the venture.

"Hear you made a tidy parcel of money out of that there old place of Strong's," one of the Davises hailed him on the road.

"Not so bad," Jörn would grin.

"Sure do admire to see a young man get on!" came Davis's encomium. But that evening he unburdened himself to the local bar hounds to the effect that "Them dirty foreigners come over here and take the bread out of our mouths. 'Tain't right. No, sir! I state and uphold, 'tain't nowise right!"

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Came a second season and further success. There was no better guarantee of that than the giving in marriage by old Walter Tucker of his daughter Mamie to Olsen.

Tall and thinnish, blue-eyed, scant-haired, pallid as an egg, I can, for the life of me, see no attraction for Jörn Olsen in Mamie Tucker. I grant she was pretty in an anaemic way—a regularity of feature. There was an innocence in her that was her birth-right as a daughter of the soil. There was a pertness about her that I did not like, which, to my mind, was a certain sign of shallowness.

What a ghastly caricature of a woman she was compared with the splendid companion of Olsen's unregenerate days! There could have been no reason for this marriage, I argue, except the desire of Olsen to rivet himself to his new life with shackles stronger than steel. I can't see that he could have loved her; but one thing is assured: he cherished her and honoured her and protected her with all the bigness that was in him.

"I was talking to your father," Olsen told her—"talking about marriage. He would have no objection if you and I——"

"Oh I don't care!" she cut in with a flirt of her head—a horrible, jarring affirmative for so solemn a moment.

Her ideal of a husband had been gathered from a cinema screen—an actor with long, plastered black hair and a woman's eyes; a figure in chaps and laden cartridge belt, who at the end of the story would fade away into a turmoil of magnolia, her head on his

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pigeon breast, his eyes raised heavenward ecstatically. But back of all that you could see in her eye the groundwork of shrewdness. This husky giant with the blond hair was on the road to riches. His house was comfortable. There was no doubt of his generosity. So she retained the movie beauty as the mate of her dreams, and married Jörn Olsen and went to live in the homestead.

I saw much of that woman; and the more I saw, the less I liked her. I had, somehow, after the incident of the Barnacle Goose, fallen into the habit of going round to the homestead on occasional evenings. He would come to the door with elaborate courtesy as I came up, and stoop to pat my two Great Danes as they padded and snuffed and bayed round him. The dogs liked him, and they had no liking for an evil or insignificant man.

"Sit down!" He would bustle about cheerfully; with the lavish Norse hospitality he would offer everything in the house, from a huge dinner to a cigar.

"Why didn't you bring your friends, Captain Bourke and the doctor?" his wife would ask. There was that flirtatious, pert look in her eyes which I didn't like. There was that affectation of gentility about her which disgusted me. "It's so lonely here!"

If there was one thing Jörn Olsen loved to hear me speak of more than another it was of the great athletic contests in the city. He enjoyed the recital of the big boxing matches of the day, the flicker of gloves, the hushed ringside; sparring, fast as a fencer's. What was my friend, the Roscommon Sheep-stealer, doing now? What of the Hoosier Bear Cat?

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And about wrestling—had Hjelmar Johnson fixed up a match yet? And I had been talking to Aberg, the old lion! Ah, there was a man!

His wife would break in pettishly:

“Don’t talk about the old wrestling. Tell us about Broadway and the plays and the cafés. Do you know, he will never come up to town with me?”

“I send you up and I give you my cheque book. Why do you want me?” Olsen would chuckle.

“He won’t even come with me to the movies.”

“I don’t blame him,” I told her roughly.

I grin, now that I know Jörn Olsen’s story, at the idea of his watching a cinema burglary, who had been the greatest cracksman of his time; of his savouring the mawkish sentimentality of the screen, who had known Belle Foliott, the magnificent!

“Do bring the captain and the doctor when you come again!” would be her last words to me, accompanied by a travesty of some movie heroine’s provocative glance. “There’s so little life here.”

I did not like that woman. And Dick Bourke, the nerve-shattered adjutant of the Connaught Rangers, my guest, and Doctor Kenyon, my friend—two gallant gentlemen if ever there lived such—liked her as little as I.

VII

A third winter passed and again May came, and the Long Island shore filled with turbulent visitors. The Olsen farm was creeping onward to the most assured success. Already the Swede was making

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plans for buying new lands about. The great ship-building movement had received its first impetus; and northward, in Port Jefferson, the first strokes of the freight carriers were being laid in rapidly improvised yards. Cubans, lazy and picturesque; black labourers from the South, laughing and careless; sturdy mechanics from Baltimore; Nova Scotians, grim and taciturn—all poured into the sleepy village at the prospect of work and high wages. They deserted the warm fields of the South, the feverish munition works of New Haven, the lazy tropic shore fronts, in that hysteria of movement which is one of the phenomena of labour.

It brought grist to Olsen's mill, for now there was an outlet for all his holding could provide, without the freight charges and the risk the New York market entailed. He was before every competitor of his. His quick mind grasped situations in an instant and his will acted on them without hesitation. It was not every venture brought success; but, if he missed, he missed well.

There was a change in him that summer—a change from the autumn before. He was more taciturn. There were deeper furrows in his face, and something dejected about him. His wife, too, had changed. She was more light-minded than ever.

“He sat here all winter and never said a word—the old sour face!” she told me. “I went down to Florida for a month with the Pickerings. Oh, say! Didn’t I just have the time of my life!”

It was to some extent, I think, the disappointment of no children coming to him that caused those

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furrows. When he married Mamie Tucker he had in mind a tribe of little towheads, solemn like the children of the Norse, sturdy, happy and protected. For them he was rearing a stronghold in the soil, making a fortune that would endure. Now and again, through the generations, one of these descendants would be constructed with the selfsame atoms of mind and body and spirit as were in himself, and thus should he live again.

Here was his ambition—and a man's ambition it was—to begin a family that would endure in this world; be the progenitor of a sterling breed that mankind might be glad of. And for this life of his own, to live in happiness—he had earned that, he thought, being purified of past crime by the ordeal of prison—with a wife he cherished and who cherished him, living a sweet, dear country idyl, like a *Pastoral* of Longus.

He took his disappointment hardly, but silently. With that clear gaze of his he plumbed his wife's shallows unerringly; but great gentleman that he was, he said nothing of it. Loyal to her in every way, he lived up to the veriest letter of the marriage bond—yes, and beyond it. There was one matter in which she was of value to him, that she bound him to the place by responsibility and chivalry. He never complained to himself, though, of her lightheadedness, of her shallowness, of her captious qualities. Who was he, to judge anyone? A jailbird!

During the years in prison he had thought little of Belle Foliott—he had thought of it merely as a light alliance, such as obtained everywhere in the dim

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world of the guerrilla. And moreover, in those days he was planning and plotting too much on forays when he should get his freedom, forays that would be as epic in their way as the raids of the Twelfth Charles. And when he came down here the adventure of the soil had shut her from his mind, and the adventure of marriage, which she herself had counselled.

“Told me that herself, she did!” he would mutter. “Told me herself.”

But now that he had awakened, as it were from a dream, his mind reverted to her. It dwelt on the old adventures; the old tenderness. All that had passed as a casual thing seven years before; but now, as he remembered it, brooded over it, analysed it, he saw the depth of feeling in it; the great comradeship. If she had only agreed with him, seen eye to eye with him, how different life would have been! But she had chosen to stick to the old road and at the fork of the ways they had parted.

What had become of her? Was she even alive still? that dear and splendid girl! Round and round, in an endless chain of speculation, of old rose-coloured memories, of poignant regrets, went his brain and heart. The image of her haunted him in the day and in the night time. At first he had thrust it from his mind as a conjugal intruder. But later, now as he saw exactly the position he was in, he came to welcome it, to cherish it, to love it.

It was all that was left to him in a world that had suddenly turned hollow; and who could blame him? Not I! If it had not been for his wife I believe he would have thrown everything up and gone forth

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looking for her, perhaps in the end returning to the old game and, as the broken forger in the train had prophesied, returning to the grim grey walls of Sing Sing. . . .

It was a splendid June night—moon at the full and the neap tide running. I had gone over to Olsen's with a new idea in my head. I thought of getting a fast power boat, hunting up a school of porpoises, and trying a little harpooning—chancy, fast sport, with a kick in it. I wanted Olsen to knock off a day or two and come with me.

“I think it's good sport,” he smiled.

“We had better have a look at the engine to-night,” I said. “I know nothing about it.”

“We go now.”

I heard outside the barking of Olsen's Airedale, as at an intruder. My own Danes joined in. Olsen's wife rose from the table, where she was devouring a Sunday supplement.

“Oh, a visitor!” She clapped her hands in glee. She went to the door. “Down, dog, down!” Olsen followed her.

“Well, Brother Olsen!” came a deep voice outside. “Well, I tracked you down. What do you know about that?”

He came through the doorway into the big sitting-room, tall, broad, muscular, jaw square and grey eyes beaming. A hard, shrewd face; one that fairly courageous men would fear—only now it was beaming with humour and good will.

“So this is the missis!” he went on. “Well, sister, I'm glad to know you.” He pumped her hand

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up and down; then held it in his for an instant in a fraternal grasp.

"Mr—" she prompted.

Olsen was looking on, with the imperturbability of a graven image.

"Reilly is my name. You must have heard of me."

She smiled, with a sort of *hauteur*—an expression copied from the stage.

"I don't think—"

"Reilly—Lieutenant Reilly, of the old Safe Squad," he elaborated.

He looked round the big, harmonious sitting-room, low-raftered, spotlessly clean; its great fireplace filled with ferns; its pleasant lamps throwing the room into mellow lights and shadow. Myself, sprawled in the depths of an armchair, his eye somehow escaped.

"Better than Sing Sing! Eh, what, Jörn?" He slapped the ex-cracksman on the shoulder. "You like it better here than the cells and skilly. 'I want the rooster, the one that used ter,'" he hummed.

"Sing Sing?" Mamie Olsen said, with a queer intonation of voice.

There was something in her tones that suggested a bird dog setting. Olsen was immobile, as before—a terrible immobility. There was a faint, intangible something in the room; a catching of breaths; a stoppage of heartbeats; a suspense; a prologue to tragedy. The big fool in blue serge blundered on:

"Don't mind me, sister! Say, didn't you know I was the one that brought old Jörn up? If it wasn't for me you wouldn't have this nice little place you

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got here. I soaked him five years up the river, and now you got fifty happy years in front of you. I came down here for a vacation, and I thought I'd drop in and see you. Say, it certainly does look grand!" He put his thumbs in the armholes of his coat and teetered on his toes.

"Five years! For what?" Mamie Olsen's voice had a snap in it like a cur dog's.

"For safe-cracking," the detective's big voice boomed out. "What did you think—for stealing poodles?" A sort of apprehensive amazement crept into his tones. "Didn't you know?"

She paid no more attention to him. She advanced on Jörn Olsen.

"So you were in jail!" Her face resembled, somehow, the muzzle of a fox. Her voice shrilled. Her eyes glinted. "So you were in jail for five years!"

He made no answer. He made no motion. He might have been a granite figure, standing solidly against the buffeting of winds.

"In jail for five years, and you never said anything about it!" Her teeth showed and her voice rose. "You dared to marry me, you jailbird! You thief! I might have known there was something wrong. You came out of nothing. I knew you were no good. I felt it all along!"

Her tones were now a scream. Her face was mottled with anger. She stamped her feet. She struck at his chest with her thin, anæmic hands.

"What am I going to say now to all my friends? What will everyone think? Who'll have anything

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to do with me now? You've made me a laughing-stock!" She caught up a sport sweater. "I'm going home; and don't you ever dare to come near me, you thief! My folks will attend to you."

She ran to the door and crashed it open. For an instant her face showed livid.

"To hell with you!" she screamed. "To hell with you!"

The big detective looked on, open-mouthed. He turned to Olsen.

"Go after her!" he counselled. "Put your arms round her. Tell her that you love her—" His voice trailed off as he looked at Olsen.

He gaped at the man's grey visage. Here was something bigger than he could understand.

"Damn me!" he swore at himself in contrition. "Say, what the devil—Jörn, I'm sorry!" He caught his hat up from the table and fumbled at the brim. "What did I ever make a crack like that for? Pie-faced mutt! Say!" He looked at Jörn Olsen with pathetic entreaty. "If I ever can do anything—oh, hell!" He plunged out through the doorway.

For a minute, for two minutes, everything in the room was tragically silent. The jarring tick of the clock burst like minute explosions. The Swede stood upright still, and as the seconds passed on his face grew greyer. Lines sprang into being about his mouth and cheek bones as though slashed by a knife. He put his hand to his forehead. In the lamplight, when they came away, his fingers glistened with moisture. He seemed to be trying to co-ordinate mind and body, as after some mortal blow.

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VIII

Like some fire spreading through dry grass the news tore through the gossip-mad Long Island villages. Perhaps to justify herself—perhaps to contrast her dramatic nobility in leaving the man tainted by jail—Mamie Olsen spread the story the length and breadth of the island. It was discussed in the fetid back rooms of the country bars. The village wise-acres collected their first impressions, garnished them, and served them up with a sauce of shrewdness.

"Knew there was something wrong with that Swede, moment I first set eyes on him!" they calculated. "Appeared to me he looked too slick a customer to be true. Heard from a man in the city that he'd committed a few murders too. Shouldn't be surprised. No, sir! Shouldn't be surprised!"

"Old Man Tucker's going to send Mamie to another state, where she can get a divorce. Considerable alimony, too, I guess."

Up in the summer colony the strictures were more severe. At the Country Club the men on the veranda viewed the situation with intense anger.

"The idea of a thief like that marrying any man's daughter!" growled John Simpkins, who had successfully looted a railroad, and whose despicable treatment of his wife had driven the unfortunate woman to drugs.

"We ought to run him out of town before he burgies the bank down here!" said the real-estate

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man who had sold Olsen the farm after peddling it fruitlessly for fifteen years. "I'm going to let the dogs out round my house, and clean out the gun. God help him if he comes round my place!"

But there was no running out of town of Jörn Olsen; and there was none of the threatened chastisement by the folks of his wife. I don't know whether he heard these things; but he must have felt them. They were in the air everywhere. They were like the sense of dangers in a jungle. They hovered above him like foul birds, ready to descend on a carcass once life expired.

He said nothing. With his Chinese labourers he remained immured in his farm. Once, twice, three times Reilly, the detective lieutenant, came to see him; argued with him as they walked along the shore together. Once or twice I met Olsen; but it was impossible to interest him in sports any more. He was invariably courteous, ever generous of time. But a change had come over his face. There was a proud tilt to the head, a slant to the eyes, a quiver of nostrils, which betokened anger pent up and fermenting. One sees that in the faces of gallant old ring generals fighting their last fight before the plunging elasticity of youth.

It all but burst on the second day of the Mineola Fair. In the grand stand of the trotting enclosure one of the Smiths, of Setauket, was gazing open-mouthed at the false starts opposite the judges' stand.

"How those two heifers I sold you, Ben?" Olsen asked.

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"Don't you dare talk to me!" the slant-chinned, fish-eyed Smith told him in his pernickety falsetto. "I know who you are, you burglar!"

For an instant Olsen swayed on the tips of his toes. His mouth set; his eyes flashed; his great hands clasped and unclasped. He was taut as a crossbow. He was a wolfhound, crouching to spring.

"Don't you touch me!" Smith howled in terror. "Help! Police! Help!"

But Olsen, with a contemptuous laugh, had passed on. . . .

IX

I had been swinging in, on a bright August day, toward Port Jefferson Harbour in the Barnacle Goose, and was just abreast the breakwater, when a cheery voice hailed me:

"Hello, cap!"

I turned round angrily. I saw a small dory, with a gas-cooker engine hung astern; and there sat my detective lieutenant. In his hand was a fishing line. Occasionally he would pull up a clean hook, curse silently, bait it again, and drop it overboard.

"Going to be a neighbour of yours next year," he announced.

"You are, are you?"

"Going to stick my poor old copper's feet into felt slippers and shuffle round the asparagus. Going to bring the kids and missus here and make farmers of them—gosh all hemlock! I just bought that place from Brother Olsen."

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" You did, did you ? "

" Yes, sir. A farmer's life for me ! "

" Well, let me tell you something "—I hadn't seen him since the fateful night at Olsen's—"I hope you make a better farmer than you do a detective. I thought a detective knew how to keep his mouth shut."

" Oh, I don't know that I did so badly, at all ! He was well rid of that Jane——"

" Oh, you don't, don't you ? Well, the first thing Olsen's going to do some of these days is to run amuck and murder someone, or wreck this town——"

" Leave that to me !" He smiled a broad smile. " I'll fix it."

" You're a great fixer, all right !" I howled at him as we swished through the harbour's mouth.

" You just wait and see !" I could gather his last words.

I passed through the Craigmore that night and heard Papa Lyons raising his voice.

" Something ought to be done about it." He was addressing his cronies. " Look at all the money there's here in the bank to pay the shipyard hands. Look at all our securities in the safe. I'm a director and you're a director, and if anything happens it falls on us. It falls on the whole countryside. We ought to run him out of the town. If he committed one burglary he must have done twenty; and they'll have the goods on him by now. I'm going up to police headquarters and see if they can't hold him technically until they send him up for something——"

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"You pimple-faced old gin dog!" I told him as I passed; "if you were thirty years younger you'd go out on a door."

Something had to be done about the matter, I decided. The best thing for Olsen would be to confront these men and in his quiet way, as the phrase is, put the fear of God into their hearts. True, he was going away and, true, Mamie Olsen was getting a divorce; but, still and all, it was a pity to allow these old detractors free scope and rein in the passing of their opinions. Just to see him walk in among them, with his set face and giant figure; to see their flush become a dull grey and their shrewd eyes fill with fear; to leave as a memory that one minute of physical cowardice which would haunt them for years—there would be a lot I would give to see that!

I went across the hills to Olsen's place. A great sultry night it was, without a breath of air. For days now the heat wave had hung over the countryside like the atmosphere of a furnace. A huge storm was brewing somewhere, but there was little hope for it for twenty-four hours to come. Under the moon the Sound looked like a glassy pond. The very trees drooped. Heat struck upwards from the soil.

The Airedale knew me too well to bark. Without thinking I opened the door of the homestead and walked into the sitting-room. Jörn Olsen was standing by the table. In the circle of light the lamp made, a collection of shining instruments was laid—sturdy things like chisels, and minute drills that were like a surgeon's probes; a length of metallic rod; a block of metal. In his hands Olsen was twirling

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the magazine of a navy revolver. He slipped it into his pocket as he saw me.

"What are you doing?" I asked. I motioned to the array on the table. "Experimenting in mechanics?"

He threw the edge of the red cloth over them.

"Yes; mechanics!" He laughed a little.

It suddenly occurred to me what the instruments were for. I looked at him keenly. There was none of the hopelessness on his face that would betoken a hounding back to his old trade.

There was none of the joy of foray. There was a set, grim, vicious expression on his features, as on the features of an avenger, a punisher. I knew what he was going to do. There were to be reprisals against his defamers. He was going to hurt them—not on their bodies, where bruises heal, but in their pockets, where the hurt lasts. They had asked for it, by George! And they were going to get it. And I was glad—God forgive me! I was glad!

X

Without, in the streets of the village, the deep bourdon of thunder rolled like an organ; and then it crashed viciously, like a great house falling; anon would come a report as of mighty ordnance. Rain rattled in the streets with the rattle of hail. Wind howled like the howl of a wolf.

For half an hour now Olsen had been working with the swiftness and sureness of a watchmaker.

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The faint swish of his drill had ceased, and the straining creaks of brace and jemmy. By his side on the floor lay the great wrench with which he had loosened the bars of the window, twisting them as easily as a man twists a tack with pincers. The outer door of the safe swung open, with a crumbling of cement. There was the click, click, click of tumblers falling. Lightning flooded the room in a blinding glare of ultra violet. The ground shook with thunder. The oiled inner door swung open as gently as a moored boat veering to the wind.

The stabbing light of the electric torch whisked into the crannies of the safe. With a steady decisive movement, Olsen began collecting the bundles of bills and the long white documents, bound with elastic. He made no effort to stow them away in his pockets. He threw them on the centre of the floor. They rose in a great heap, like a prepared bonfire. He hefted a bag of coin for an instant then put it in his pocket.

For a quarter the space of time a second ticks he tensed alertly. As his hand came out of his pocket the big navy revolver was grasped in it. He bent over the pile of papers. He stood up easily. The spot of the torch shot unerringly toward a corner of the room. The revolver was levelled with it in a parallel line.

“Come here!” he said.

A big figure in blue serge strolled forward.

“Oh, Reilly!” Olsen observed, as though he were meeting the detective on the street.

“Now what do you want with that money?”

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Reilly argued. "Haven't you got enough of your own? What are you lifting it for? Tell me, now."

"I'm going to burn it."

"In the pig's eye, you are! What about that bag of coin in your pocket?"

"I throw it in the Sound."

"Now what are you making a foolish crack like that for? What do you want burning the stuff for and chucking it in the Sound? Are you bugs?"

"I like it!" Olsen laughed.

"Well, I'm going to pinch you," Reilly decided.

"You pinch me after. I do it first."

"You wouldn't do something for your friend Reilly——"

"Oh, go to blazes!" Olsen said shortly.

"What's your hurry? Wait a minute!" There was a faint grin about the corners of Reilly's mouth. "Maybe you'll do it for somebody else."

The crashing artillery of the thunder had passed off, like some faint recessional. The howling of the wind had become a faint soughing, as among the branches of trees. The lightning played infrequently in pale, innocuous sheets. Already the August dawn was coming up, cold, colourless, like spring water.

"Come here, Belle!" Reilly called.

Olsen stood rigid, as if petrified. Through a doorway behind the detective Belle Foliott came in. She wavered a minute; put her hand on her bosom; choked, as if something were in her throat; walked forward.

"Will you not do it for me, Jörn? Will you not do it for me?"

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She stood undecided an instant. She ran forward and threw herself on his breast.

"Oh, Jörn Olsen!" she cried. "My Jörn Olsen!"

He said nothing. He patted her head as it lay on his shoulder.

Reilly walked over to the safe and began examining it. He nodded his head appreciatively at the drill marks. He turned round.

"Now look-a-here, you son of a gun," he told Olsen: "I got this girl of yours up in New York, that you should have dragged down here by the hair of her head, whether she wanted to come or not. That rat husband of hers is dead. He made a crack at a get-away and a guard plugged him. And that jane of yours is just howling for divorce. Let her! say I. You two get married and stick to the farm business."

"Here?" Olsen asked.

"Not on your sweet life!" The detective laughed. "Oh, no! I got your place and I'm going to stick to it. You go to Oregon, or somewhere, and get a regular place. That field of yours is fit only for an old copper with broken arches."

There was a faint tinge of red in the sky. Outside, the wind swept by, cool and powerful. A bird chirruped somewhere at the dawn.

"Walk it to St. James—both of you—and take the train to New York there. I'll send up your things. Go on, now! Beat it before I run you in. Give me that bag out of your pocket, you big Swede!"

They turned to go.

"You good guy, Reilly!"

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Jörn shook his hand. Belle Foliott kissed him suddenly.

"Lay off of it!" Reilly observed gruffly. "Out the back way!"

He looked round at the pile of papers on the floor; at the safe, with its door swung open; at the crumbling mortar in the chinks.

"There's going to be some explaining, to be sure," he puzzled. He laughed suddenly. "It's nothing in my young life. I'm a farmer!"

The sound of footsteps on the pavement without made him look up. The pair was passing the window. Erect and strong and confident, his head high, his shoulders set, Jörn Olsen walked; in the dawn his face outlined like the face of some proud king stamped on a gold coin.

And by his side Belle Foliott went, the dawn breeze swirling her draperies as it swirls those of the Victory of Samothrace; in her face an intangible, assured, eternal something, like the flush of dawn, like the joyous budding of flowers—the look of brides.

III

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WHEN, during the two years' African nightmare of blackwater fever, Satanic climate, treacherous natives, and of horrors that crawled and horrors that flew, in which he traced and charted the headwaters of the N'go for the Royal Geographic people, Patrick Burgoyne thought of New York and of his return to it, his heart would give a little spasmodic jump of delight and his fever-shattered blood would course with unaccustomed vigour through his veins. He would conjure up the green landfall of Staten Island, as the Israelites must have dreamed of Canaan, and no Rhodian mariner ever yearned for a sight of his Colossus as the explorer did for a glimpse of the matronly statue in Manhattan harbour that is eternally welcoming home wanderers from the starry seas.

But now, as the liner crept up the bay, pilot aboard and a little rainbow playing through the foam at her knife-like prow, the corners of Burgoyne's mouth were drawn tightly and a shadow darkened his eyes. On one side of him a famous musical-comedy actress fussed, eager for a last conversation. On the other a world-known banker hovered uneasily, waiting

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timidly for a chance to invite the great African traveller to his Long Island home for a week-end. But Burgoyne saw neither of them. Staten Island came and went. The gentle, deceptive forts of the harbour slipped southward. The triangular wedge of Manhattan showed like the bow of a giant barge. Whistles blew warningly, confidently, truculently. Burgoyne saw nothing, heard nothing.

A sea-gull had started him thinking when they passed Scotland lightship, a sea-gull with its stretch of white wing showing dimly against the blue and silver of a May sky. It had brought to his mind a May morning ten years before when he and Roger Dutton had crossed the East River on a ferryboat. He still saw Dutton, his old briar pipe clutched loosely in his left hand, his blue eyes shining with enthusiasm, his right hand rumpling his tousled golden hair. Dutton had been talking of aeroplanes, and was pointing out the sea-gull as an example in ballistics.

And as Burgoyne leaned over the rail of the hurricane deck, the whole tragedy of Dutton's life crept through his mind like the thread of a forgotten story. He remembered how he had met Roger Dutton. He had brought some queer crystals back from Somaliland and a friend had advised him to show them to the research men at the Hirsch Foundation. At the bureau an official had taken him to see Mr. Dutton. They had opened the door of the laboratory when a blinding flash of violet light struck their eyes. There was an appalling crash and billows of white smoke. A lean, tousled figure with a nasty cut on its forehead rose from the floor and staggered

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toward them, its right arm hanging pitifully limp by its side.

“Sorry!” it said, “a new potassium salt that’s a bit skittish as yet.” Suddenly it grabbed hold of Burgoyne and fell across a table in a faint.

And thus dramatically, spectacularly, even, Burgoyne came to know Roger Dutton.

Gradually, and with the great sincerity that is part and parcel of natures like Burgoyne’s, the explorer came to like and admire the brilliant young scientist. There was a great deal in common between them—the same ambitious, wide desire for further knowledge, the same pathfinder’s instinct, the same solid contemplation. The traveller crouching over his elephant gun in the underbrush waiting for game undergoes the same mental processes as the scientist sitting by a Bunsen burner over a Jean glass tube awaiting a chemical reaction. To Burgoyne there was something wonderful about a man who handled radium with the nonchalance that other people exhibited toward nickel and copper, who could analyze the gases of the sun, and transmute metals as Raymond Lully did. And Dutton saw no figure on earth more romantic than the man who knew his Timbuctu better than his Forty-second Street, and who discovered new countries as other people walk into new streets.

“Tell him,” Dutton would instruct Burgoyne with each new friend to whom he introduced the explorer, “tell him about that dinosaur you met up the Congo, and then tell him about the deserted city in the Libyan desert. Gad! man, listen to this!”

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Dutton insisted on bringing the explorer home with him to that solid brownstone house on Madison Avenue that a grandfather Dutton had builded with an eye to seven generations, and he introduced him to that very great and extraordinarily young-looking lady who was his mother. Burgoyne felt himself warm towards her from the first moment he saw her. He wondered to himself what her secret was that at forty-five she looked like thirty. Burgoyne, though he knew little about women, appreciated that air of smartness that only the New Yorker and the Parisienne have, and he appreciated the quiet dignity and the warm gentleness of her. And she appreciated him.

"What do I think of Captain Burgoyne, Roger?" she answered after he had gone that first night. "I think he is all of a man, and a big man. A man to trust and to make a friend of."

And Dutton, acting on her advice, grappled Burgoyne closer to him day by day. The African man came more and more often to that comfortable and homelike house that had its brownstone front on Madison Avenue. With that amiable ignorance of men who have their own professions at their finger tips, they discussed politics and art and letters and great happenings of the day. And that kindly, extraordinary young lady who was Dutton's mother smiled wisely on them both with the tolerant maternal smile of a woman of the world.

And then Roger Dutton did the inconceivable thing.

He told Burgoyne that he was going to be married, and an expression of guardedness in his eyes warned

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the explorer that there was something wrong about it, so Burgoyne was ready for a sense of shock when he was introduced to the girl.

"I am very glad to meet you," she said, and extended a pinkly manicured hand. And Burgoyne's worst fears were realized.

She was very pretty—adorably pretty—Burgoyne said to himself. Her viciously vacuous head was perfect. But her eyes were too sharp, and her mouth was too red, and her teeth were too keen, and she was better dressed than any woman had a right to be. The long solitudes of Africa had made Burgoyne like a god, knowing good and evil, and he knew that Claire Hawley was thoroughly evil. He did not need to be told that she danced for a living, and he listened decorously to the age-old excuse of the clergyman's daughter who was forced to go on the stage or die of starvation.

And as he listened he reconstructed in his mind the love-story of the pair, the first chance meeting at some Bohemian gathering; the queer attraction that such women have for such decent men as Dutton; the savage determination of the dancer to use the Dutton name as an entry card to Fifth Avenue, her adroit angling, her tale at which a clubman would have laughed but at which the metallurgist felt a glow of savage resentment against the world for its treatment of her, his infatuation, his high and terrible chivalry. Burgoyne looked at his friend's eyes and saw there was no use remonstrating. The only thing to do was to stand by and give a hand when needed.

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And Roger Dutton's mother looked in her son's eyes, and she too forbore to say anything. She recognized that light. She had seen it in the elder Dutton's eyes when he was burning himself out like a magnesium candle to right the irremediable wrongs of the world.

And so they were married. Burgoyne, with his fine sense of loyalty and friendship, remained in New York, and stood at his friend's elbow while the pair were bound by book and candle. He produced the ring when the ring was wanted. He signed the register in that cramped, squat hand of his. He marched down the aisle behind the couple while the finest organ in New York throbbed out of its brazen throat a welcome to a very unwelcome bride. And then he took the trail to the Uganda country.

"There," he said to himself as he went, "there ends a fine man!"

When, two years later, Burgoyne returned, Roger Dutton was not yet ended, but it passed Burgoyne's understanding why he was not. The story he was told rang in his ears like some horrible nightmare—a story of heart-breaking disillusionment for Dutton, of flaunted ideals, of horrible, soul-tearing quarrels, of drunkenness and scandal and leering eyes and wagging tongues, and lastly, of a reckless, shameless flight to Paris on the bride's part, where she was even now dancing her diabolically shameless dance in the most shameless *revue* on the boulevards.

The explorer had once attempted to draw out Dutton on the story, thinking, in his simple-feeling way, that a recital of the whole thing would lift a

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load from his friend's heart. They were in the laboratory. Burgoyne put a leading question.

The metallurgist went white in the face. He backed to the acid-stained bench. His hands gripped and fumbled at it unfeelingly. There was the look in his eyes of a man who has seen horror and who remembers it.

"Ugh!" he shuddered with his teeth bare and his face twitching, "ugh! O ye gods!" And that was the end of Patrick Burgoyne's questioning.

And as Burgoyne went away this time—he was going into the depths of the Congo, tracking the pygmy tribes—he felt his heart sink as he had never thought it could sink.

"There," he said to himself with cold fear gripping him, "is a man who is going insane!"

But when he came back he was reassured. The thing that should have happened five years before had arrived too late, but it had saved Roger Dutton's reason. Dutton was in love. Burgoyne recognized the moment he saw her that Virginia Sturgis was the woman Dutton should have married. He liked her for her beauty, for her Greek profile and her slim strength; he liked her for the warm glow that played on her face when she looked at the tousled head and the thin, troubled features of the young scientist. He placed her quickly as the daughter of old Admiral Sturgis, the fighting sea-dog of the Atlantic, whose face was a savage challenge and whose moustache and eyebrows bristled like the hair on a terrier's coat.

"I met your father in Hongkong and in Zanzibar, Miss Sturgis," he said, "a great man and a gallant warrior."

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And then once more he took himself and his pipe to the house on Madison Avenue, and he settled down to observe Dutton and the girl he loved. The metallurgist was very silent now, and there were two hard, perpendicular lines between his eyebrows that had not been there before. His face was thin, with hollows about the cheekbones and hollows about the temples, and the corners of his mouth had taken on a rigid downward set. Only when Virginia Sturgis came in to see Dutton's mother—she, Burgoyne noticed with amazed appreciation, had grown but little older, a fine leaf-like maze of wrinkles about her eyes, and a sprinkling of grey in her hair—did Dutton's features lose their grim cast. They warmed up slowly and he began to talk a little in his old vein. He would rise, ruffle his hair, and his eyes would gleam. And then Burgoyne made an appalling discovery. Virginia Sturgis was as much in love with the young scientist as he was with her. It showed in little minute things—glances infinitesimally too warm for friendship, little quiverings of the lips, uncertain movements of her hands. But Burgoyne knew.

"It sounds wrong, and I'm rather certain that it is wrong," said Burgoyne to himself, "but I'm dashed glad it's as it is." His eye caught that of Dutton's mother across the red warmth of the drawing-room, and though she said no word then or thereafter, he knew she thought as he did.

And Burgoyne noticed the first dawning flush of their love deepen into a strong, pathetic, pure thing that showed like white light in both their faces, that transformed her from a beautiful girl into a beautiful

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woman, and that wiped the grim, troubled look from Dutton's face and left behind only the strength that comes from hard and bitter experience. He saw Dutton return to his work with a smashing energy that he had not shown for six years. He rejoiced with him when out of a two-ton heap of slag the metallurgist had isolated a few milligrams of substance that proved to be a new metal, and he had difficulty in keeping a hard, bitter lump from showing in his throat when Dutton named it "virginium," and Virginia Sturgis was not too proud to show the explorer she was crying. For four years things had gone on like this, a silent, strong, hopeless compact of love.

Burgoyne, on one of his flying visits, had ventured to offer a sledge-hammer solution of the problem. He had gone to Dutton's wonderfully young and wonderfully gentle mother.

"Listen," he suggested. "Why doesn't he divorce the woman? He could get a divorce easily enough."

"You wouldn't really want him to divorce her, and to marry Virginia, would you?" she asked, and she smiled her wise, pathetic smile.

"I would not," Burgoyne blurted out sincerely.

But what was there to do? the explorer asked himself. Were these two young people to wear themselves out in their helpless, hopeless way? The sight of it made him savage and made him sick at heart. The thought of it haunted him as he slipped unrejoicingly into the promised joyful haven he had seen by camp-fires for two years. The giant liner crept around the edge of her dock like a turtle.

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Below, on the pier, a thousand faces shone with welcoming smiles. Handkerchiefs fluttered like snowflakes. Saturnine customs men eyed the incoming passengers with suspicion and scorn. The clang and clatter of New York rose in a great barbaric chant. Burgoyne glanced around for his steward.

“I’ve half a mind to go over to Paris—with a gun,” said Patrick Burgoyne.

When for two solid years you have worn nothing else but khaki puttees, breeches, shirt, and sun-helmet; when your feet have been encased in heavy sport shoes and Arab leather stockings; when your fingers have held little else than a rhinoceros-hide whip and the stock of a big-game rifle, it is a luxury rivalling the promised ones of Paradise to slip into morning coat and grey trousers, to feel supple shoes and snug spats on feet and ankles, to tap the pavement with a springy malacca. Burgoyne was savouring the luxury to the utmost. As he swung out of his hotel into Fifth Avenue people turned to look at him. There was something compelling about this tanned, young, serious face and his long-range black eyes, about his heavy-weight’s shoulders and his cat’s tread. A taxi driver raised hand and eyebrows in a mute query. Burgoyne shook his head and strode southward.

It was May on Fifth Avenue—sunshine filling the street like a country lane. Spring crept into the city from God knows where. The green buses on the asphalt had something vernal about them, as though they were hung with green foliage. The promise of

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summer smiled in the faces of the passers-by. Men and women on the sidewalks, motors, drays, carriages on the street, suggested celebrants in a carnival. Before Burgoyne, across the gully of Forty-second Street, the white library slumbered like a Greek temple in a green grove. Across the way a synagogue flung out its Oriental challenge valiantly to the Western world. Northward toward the Park the Avenue ran its mile of broad boulevard like the course of a great river.

At Forty-second Street Burgoyne stopped short. A look of astonished pleasure showed on his face. His hat flashed from his head. He took a step forward.

“Mrs. Dutton!” he half gasped.

She had stopped short in front of him and was looking at him with smiling, welcoming eyes, and as Burgoyne stood watching her, his face showing astonishment as if he were not certain it could be she, he noticed, as he always did, the eternal youth and the eternal, maternal gentleness of her. The hair about her temples was turning into fine platinum threads, and the little shadows about her eyes deepened them and made them throb like pulses.

“It is good to see you again,” she said with the same deep sincerity in which she had welcomed him to her house ten years before. She stood watching him, making no movement. Her smile played on him like a beam of sunshine. “When did you arrive?”

“About two hours ago,” said Burgoyne.

“Put on your hat again,” she laughed, “and turn and walk with me up the Avenue.”

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They passed along through the swarming blocks. St. Patrick's reared its great greyish bulk to the right of them. An Elevated train thundered near by on Sixth Avenue. On each side of them somnolent by-streets slumbered like backwaters. As they walked, Burgoyne kept looking at her. She had the same proud, quiet walk, he saw, chin high in the air and eyes level. In her quiet, well-tailored tweeds, and her trim black hat, she had the air of a queen. Burgoyne was proud to be with her.

"And Roger?" he asked. "How is he?"

She lowered her head. Burgoyne saw a flicker of pain cross her brows.

"He is in very serious trouble," she answered. Her voice came softly and poignantly. "I want you to go to him at once."

"Tell me," said Burgoyne.

"Something in the papers this morning drove him nearly insane," she replied, "and then Virginia Sturgis is going away—for two years."

"Going away?" Burgoyne stuttered.

"The admiral wants to make a last trip round the world before he dies. She couldn't stay at home, not even for Roger. My boy's in trouble. Will you go to him, Captain Burgoyne?"

"Of course, I'll go to him," Burgoyne stopped short. "I'll go to him right now."

She turned and looked at him. They were standing at Fifty-seventh Street. Buses purred around the corner on their way to Riverside Drive. Two blocks north of them the Park showed in a corner of green; the river of the Avenue widened into a bay in front

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of the Plaza, and a vast current of traffic eddied about in it as in a maelstrom.

"And then there is something else," she continued. "I have got news for him. And I think it is best for a man to be with him when he hears it. A woman is no use in moments like these. His wife is dead."

"Is dead?" Burgoyne's voice rose to a shout.

"I just heard of it now. She died last night coming from a party. Her motor plunged into the Seine and she was drowned. When you have told him, wire to Paris for corroboration."

Burgoyne raised his stick. A driver sprang out of his taxi across the street and gave a swift jerk to his crank.

"And another thing, Captain Burgoyne," she said. "Don't say who told you. I think it is you who should be with him now, and if he heard I knew, he would expect that I should have come with it to him. And I should not. Do you understand?"

Burgoyne nodded. He did not understand, but anything she said must have a good reason, and she must somehow be right, he thought. The taxi threaded its way across the street. She went suddenly taut, and a look of fear came into her eyes.

"For heaven's sake lose no time," she said. Her tones cut the air in a horrified whisper.

The yellow bulk of the cab crept up to the pavement. Burgoyne sprang into it.

"The Hirsch Institute," he snapped, "and drive like the devil."

The taxi swung to the left and flashed down a side

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street. The grey and brown houses slid by in a dun frieze. Suddenly Burgoyne swore viciously.

"I don't know what's coming over me," he snapped. "I never said good-bye to her, and I never shook hands either when I met or when I left her. A few more years on the trail, and a Bantu Hottentot will have nothing on me."

There is a sense of detachment about a laboratory that no other place possesses. You open a door and the clamour and bustle and vibration of the world fade away. You are in a manufactory of elementals, a workshop where existence is analyzed, synthetized and dispensed. A laboratory has no sound and no colour, but it pulses with life, like air. Burgoyne, as he strode down the stone corridors, his footfalls ringing brazenly, felt as if he had stepped from one planet to another. Occasionally a washer slipped past him, in his twill overalls, pale and philosophical as any professor student.

As Burgoyne walked along, he pictured to himself smilingly the encounter with his friend. Dutton would be hovering about his black electric furnace, pipe in hand, hair tousled. There would be that grim pattern of lines on his face that Burgoyne would have given many days of his life for the power to wipe away.

He reached the yellow door he remembered so well. He stretched out his hand gently, turned the knob and pushed. The door did not move.

He smiled to himself easily. He had often heard Roger complain of the washers and students who

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interrupted him at experiments, and how he was forced to lock the door, and refuse to open it until the intruder had gone away in disgust or threatened to smash the panels. Burgoyne beat a rapid tattoo on the wood and waited a moment.

And then imperceptibly, as he stood there lounging, silently, without a movement, a curious change came over Patrick Burgoyne. Every muscle seemed to stiffen and he became rigid as stone. The roving eyes fixed like the focussing of searchlights. His brows came together and his mouth resolved itself into a rigid line. He had seen nothing; he had heard nothing. He had only sensed something, with his jungle training. Three years before in Uganda the same feeling had crept over him while sitting reading by his camp fire. His hand had crept out softly for his rifle and he had swung it around barely in time to stop the charge of a Senussiyeh fanatic. On his last journey he had felt it while swimming lazily in the Zambesi. He reached the shore with a racing crawl-stroke in time to hear the jaws of an alligator meet behind him like a steel trap. And in remembrance of these Burgoyne lost little time in acting.

He put his hat and stick down noiselessly and with that cat's tread of his he walked backward for about twenty feet. He raised himself on his toes and swung backward and forward for an instant. He launched himself forward like a bullet from a rifle; his two hundred pounds of steel frame took the air like a diver. His shoulder struck the door with a crash like an explosion. He staggered forward to

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his hands and knees, flashed to his feet like a wrestler and looked about him.

"I thought so," he snapped.

The lean figure with the tousled hair was there, as Burgoyne expected, but the furnace was not roaring, and no crucible simmered on its tripod. The figure leaned against a laboratory bench and gazed at Burgoyne with vague, bloodshot eyes. There was something in his hand, something bulky, squat, metallic, sinister. Burgoyne strode forward.

"You fool," he muttered savagely, "you cursed fool!"

He caught the hand with the automatic at the wrist. He caught the figure by the shoulder.

"Were you going to do that, Roger?" he asked slowly. "Were you going to do it?"

Dutton looked at him a moment with haggard, hopeless eyes.

"Yes, I was," he answered slowly. "I was going to do it when the door broke, Burgoyne."

Burgoyne dragged him to a stool.

"Sit down," he said. The roughness had gone out of his voice. "Give me that." He pocketed the automatic. "It's all right," he added huskily.

He waited for an instant to collect himself. Little beads of perspiration were moistening his brow, and now that the danger was over he felt his heart beating spasmodically, and his lungs were clamouring for air. He glanced about the laboratory searching for words to put his message, and he could not find them. His eye took in blankly the old familiar objects of the laboratory, the glass bottles filled with

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ores in their neat shining rows, the bulk of the furnace in the corner, the white enamel sinks, the bulging retorts, the fine brass balances. Suddenly Dutton's hand fell on his arm.

"I'm sorry, Patrick," he said slowly and wearily, "but things got too bad in the long run. I went mad. It's over now, but look at that."

He stretched a newspaper towards Burgoyne. The headlines of the story from the Paris correspondent struck the explorer's eyes like a physical blow.

"My word!" he said.

"That's it," Dutton's tones bit like acid. "That's the last straw. The shameless, abandoned——"

Burgoyne laid his arm across the scientist's shoulder.

"You mustn't say that, Roger," he murmured. "You mustn't ever say anything like that now, because"—his voice broke—"because she's dead."

You, if you know Burgoyne, must often have heard him speak of that wonderful sister of his, who, to hear him tell of her, must combine all the graces and all the beauty of ancient and present days. Burgoyne is right. She is a very beautiful woman, and she has got the warmest and biggest heart that beats. Her face is perfect, a fine chiselled Roman type, with eyes like deep water. Cornelia, who mothered the Gracchi, must have had features like Lorraine Dacy's, only Cornelia's would have been harder.

They sat together in the tea-room of the Ritz that afternoon. Burgoyne had taken a breakneck ride

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from old Admiral Sturgis's a scant half hour before, for he would much rather break an appointment with Menelik of Abyssinia than with his wonderful sister. The tables around them were filled with the coy modesty of spring costumes. There was a gentle murmur of conversation like the flutter of leaves. Immaculate waiters threaded their way noiselessly through the aisles. André, the captain, whose suave demeanour an ambassador has envied, looked about the room with a dignified welcoming smile. Overhead in the balcony the orchestra crooned the sobbing bars of a Russian folk-song.

"I left both of them sitting together and looking at each other blankly," Burgoyne was telling her, "like two people who have been shipwrecked and who can't understand that they are saved, and I went up to the admiral's study. He was glad to see me, he was good enough to say."

"I'm going off on a two years' trip round the world next Saturday, Burgoyne," he said, 'going to see it all again before they sound Taps.'

"How can you do that, sir," I said, 'when your daughter is going to be married in at most six months' time?' And then there was the dickens to pay. I had to explain everything, but in the end I won. You've got to be matron of honour, Lorry."

He chose a cigarette with golden tobacco like ripening corn. He lit it.

"I tell you, Lorry, that scene in the laboratory smashed me up. It's all safe now, though. But if I had got there one instant later——" He shook his head with a grim smile. Lorraine's hand had gone

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to her breast. There was a great gentleness in her eyes, and a queer, scared look.

"What I can't understand," Burgoyne went on, "is why Mrs. Dutton—by the way, I must telephone to her immediately that all's right—why she should have asked me not to let Roger know she told me, that she sent me. I can't understand it."

Lorraine turned her head away a moment. When she looked at him again her eyes were wet and a little silver rivulet trickled down her cheek.

"I can understand, dear," she said. Her voice became a whisper. "I can understand why. Mrs. Dutton died eighteen months ago."

IV

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SHE had slipped out of the mouth of the Elbe that morning—two hundred feet of sinister dull metal—past a forest of shipping, schooners, barques, barquentines, tramp steamers, passenger liners: past the lugubrious, futile line of men-of-war, caught in the harbour, like rats in a corner, and had punched her way into the snapping swell of the North Sea. Three hours out, fifty miles, the bridge had caught sight of the grim, waiting line of British battleships, squat, ugly, efficient, with thin tendrils of smoke floating dreamily from their stacks, like tobacco fumes from the pipe of an idler. She had dived instantaneously to sixty feet, and slipped cautiously past, hugging the shore. The officers of the bridge had mopped wet foreheads and laughed short, uneasy laughs of relief when she rose in safety twenty miles farther out. In that two hours and a half's submersion they had trusted blindly to Fate against sudden death. For even at sixty feet beneath the battle line there were dangers—mines cunningly balanced and vast, powerful steel nets—incredible, horrible things.

She was out of danger and a clear sea before her, Schroeder said to himself as he leaned over the rail

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of the collapsible bridge, a man, six feet two of clean bone and sinew. The lean Bavarian quartermaster at the wheel looked at him with eyes eloquent with admiration, taking in his square, fighter's head: the closely cropped blond hair showing beneath the commander's cap; the heavy, clefted chin; the firm, thin mouth; the high cheek-bones; half-closed greyish-blue eyes; the bull's neck. The quartermaster looked at the hands which held on to the rail, two great square, brown things. He shivered a little as he thought of those at his throat.

The commander drew himself up slowly, with the deliberate movement of a big animal, and began pacing the deck. He took in the fifteen feet of it in five easy strides. The submarine was cutting into her course like a racing-yacht. A long, thin angle of white foam broke over her bow, slapping her steel sides with a flat, metallic sound that suggested wood striking iron. Spray boiled over the freeboard and curled sinuously about the bridge. The staccato cough of the gasoline exhaust cut into the air with a monotonous rasp.

Schroeder stopped in stride and glanced at the compass.

"North-west by north," he read.

"North-west by north it is, sir," the quartermaster chimed in.

Schroeder's eye brightened as he looked about. All around him, like a vast grey plain, the North Sea stretched. The submarine's dull brown against the blue of the nearer water suggested a lone porpoise driving onward. There was an air of efficiency

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about everything which appealed to Schroeder. The sharp, metallic lines of the two periscopes, standing up like bare trees on a desolate moorland; the giant rivets on the deck; the lines of the wireless rigging; the bridge that could be taken apart and brought below in a minute and a half—compass, chronometer, and wheel; the delicate, flowing line of the great sea-harrier; the bulge of the hidden nine-pounder aft; the sinewy quartermaster, bent over the horizontal wheel like a chauffeur over the steering-gear of an automobile—all gave him a sense of power, of confidence in man's strength and ability, that sent his pulse beating and his eye gleaming with pride. To put to sea in a mere husk of steel, to appear and disappear at will, to deal death by mere pressure of a button, and all this the result of the grey matter that is in every man's skull—that was life, he said, that was triumph!

He raised his sea-glasses and swept the grey line of horizon deliberately, searchingly. It seemed all one vast expanse of nothingness. Very dimly on the west he thought he could distinguish a speck of brown sail—some adventurous fisherman trawling for mackerel. But as yet nothing for him. He had been detailed to watch the Norwegian lane for contraband. Supplies were coming into Havre with regularity that came neither down the Baltic nor across from America. The grim, iron-fisted policy which made the English Channel a nightmare of horror was having its effect. Atlantic travel had all but stopped, but there was still a formidable leak. May had come and the ice had broken in Archangel

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harbour. A shrewd intelligence officer suggested that Russian vessels were skirting the Scandinavian coast and creeping southward, laden to the scuppers with supplies. It was Schroeder's task to reconnoitre and if possible to deal a stiff lesson. There were rumours too of Danish, and Swedish, and Norwegian skippers who didn't mind running the blockade for the adventure and the money in it. He had been given his own discretion how to act in cases not covered by his instructions. He knew how, he nodded to himself grimly, and his mouth twisted—he knew.

Somewhere below six muffled tinkles rang out. It was seven o'clock. There was the trickle of a musical-comedy bar being whistled, and the first lieutenant, a lithe, wiry Saxon, with black hair and flashing black eyes, appeared through the manhole. He made his way forward.

"Is that you, Halbrandt?"

"Yes, sir."

"Has the wireless got anything?"

"Not a thing, sir."

The commander handed over the glasses.

"I think I'll let you take watch now," he said, in his snappy, clean-cut tones. "Keep her off a couple of points, and don't take your eye off the sky-line for a moment. I'm going to turn in. The moment anything appears let me know."

"All right, sir."

Schroeder took a last look before he left the bridge. The bow still cut its flurry of foam. A wind had sprung up, and was whining through the wireless rigging. The vast desert of grey flowed off on all

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sides. There was a pale, hazy red smudge in the west—the setting sun.

Dawn broke—a faint flurry of pink and mauve. The sun flashed up in a great disk of polished brass. The plain of the sea extended green to the right and left, quivering, nervous, with caps of white foam like patches of snow on grass. A keen salt wind blew southward. Overhead a gull hovered like an aeroplane. A bunch of brown sea-weed floated past. The submarine cut into the waves like a knife, the sunlight making flashes of rainbow through the foam of the bow.

The navigating lieutenant turned to Schroeder.

“She’s doing good time,” he said.

“She’ll be doing something else besides good time,” the commander grinned, “if there’s any luck at all. Submarines aren’t built for racing; fighting’s their best suit.”

Hours passed, marked by the tinkle of the bells below. The watch changed. The sun mounted upwards and beat down perpendicularly. The rolling swell of the Dogger Bank caught and lifted them slowly and measuredly like the rocking of a cradle. The commander still kept to the bridge, scanning the horizon through his bulging sea-glasses. He handed them to the officer of the watch.

“Take a look to starboard. See anything?” he asked.

The officer of the watch, a thin, fair-haired boy, handed them back.

“It looks like smoke,” he answered.

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A faint brownish wisp, like the fleece of a cloud, hung off the sky-line. The submarine flashed ahead, the hollow cough of the exhaust rattling out its staccato routine. The wisp on the horizon grew more distinct. It resolved itself into two thin trickles of brown. Schroeder swung about on his heel.

"East-north-east," he snapped to the quartermaster at the wheel; "keep her off. Port a bit. A bit more. Steady! Steady!"

The bow of the submarine swung around in a segment of foam. Schroeder shut his glasses with a click.

"Clear the decks," he rasped.

The officer of the watch raised his whistle to his lips. It cut into the air in three shrill blasts. Blue-bloused forms swung up the manhole steps, swung on to the iron deck, and scurried forward. Quartermasters issued short, crisp orders. There was the whine of ropes through pulleys. Locks clicked. Compass, chronometer, and muffled search-light disappeared like a conjurer's trick. Somewhere a bell rang out a brazen signal.

"All below," Schroeder ordered.

The shield of the manhole shut to with a hollow clang. Below was a narrow passage of steel, lighted at intervals with electric bulbs. Great veins of wiring passed along the walls—huge, ungainly things. Schroeder bent his six feet two as he picked his way along the metal passage towards the conning-tower. At intervals doors opened in the alley, like the staterooms of a liner. On each side little cubby-holes of

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alcoves showed, marvels of compactness and inch-saving; the quarters of the officers and crew, long, inadequate things, with bunks lining them like rows of shelves; pantries; the galley, with its cunning electric devices for cooking; the arsenal, with the flashing colonnades of rifles caught to the wall; store-rooms; lockers. He turned and made one last round before submersion. He passed through the engine-room, where the mechanics pottered around the giant oil-engines; through the storage-batteries, where lean electricians in brown jumpers passed from jar to jar with the eyes of hawks. He walked forward to the torpedo-chamber in the bow, with its arc light throwing dim blue-and-black shadows among the flashing steel capsules that held the deadly projectiles. The torpedo lieutenant stepped forward to meet him.

"All shipshape here, sir," the lieutenant reported.

"All seven in order?" Schroeder asked.

"Every one ready. Gyroscopes fitted and air connections made."

The commander picked his way out through the lines of steel tubing that led to the compressed-air chambers. He stepped through the torpedo-store-room, where a gunner was making a tally of material; through the operating-room, with its walls covered by a bewildering series of wiring, of coils, transformers, gauges, wheels, levers, and clutches, the whole making a grotesque mechanical puzzle that seemed past human brains to solve. The engineer lieutenant passed from one gauge to another. His mate pored over a blue-print. Schroeder swung out

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into the alley again, and clambered up the ladder to the conning-tower. He turned to the helmsman sitting with his eye to the periscope.

"Mark for the smoke to starboard," he directed. "Have you got it?"

"Ready, sir."

Schroeder reached for the lever of the signal-box. It came back with a click to half-speed ahead. There was the high, whining whir of a motor being started. The iron frame of the submarine began to vibrate with a nervous, pulsing movement. There was the tang of oil in the air. The commander picked the telephone receiver from the wall.

"Open tanks 2 and 5, port and starboard," he ordered.

There was a slight wallow from right to left and back again. The whir of the motors became a throaty rumble.

"Drop the diving-planes. Seven degrees," he directed the helmsman.

Water rose above the line of square portholes in a muddy, yellow haze. Prisms and rainbows of refracted sunlight glowed through them for a moment in coarse, broad colours. The helmsman notched his plane-lever with a click, and a blank wall of blue showed before the windows, that shaded off gradually into a misty bog of green.

Schroeder glanced about the flattened cylinder of the conning-tower, at the automobile wheel of the helmsman, at the heavy plane-lever; at the shining brass of the compass, chronometer, spirit-level, and depth gauge; at the black enamel of the telephone.

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From above, the steel tubes of the periscopes jutted downward like rods. He watched the needle of the gauge creep around to fifty feet.

"Even keel," he ordered. He jerked the lever of the signal-box. "Full speed ahead."

The bow of the submarine rose slowly and steadied. The hum of the motors became a high, jarring roar. The platform of the conning-tower vibrated like the skin of a drum. Little nervous shivers passed from the floor into the bodies of the commander and the helmsman and set their fingers aquiver. Oil floated through the air in infinitesimal particles, like the odour of machine-works. The minute-hand of the chronometer moved twenty times, moved thirty, forty, fifty. The commander turned to the man at the wheel.

"Planes up," he ordered. "Easy on. Three degrees. Steady on."

The floor tilted upward. The blue of the water outside the portholes changed gradually to a dark green, became lighter, had a tinge of yellow in it.

"Even keel," Schroeder said.

He bent forward and put his eye to the lens of the periscope. A great expanse of blue water met his eye. He turned the gun-metal crank easily. The periscope revolved. Slowly, like an apparition moving across a biograph screen, the bow, the midships, the stern of a liner crept into view. Two thousand yards away the two black smoke-stacks, the masts, rigging, decks, bridge, and boats hove up vaguely as through a mist. Along her sides he could distinguish a name painted in giant letters.

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"Starboard," he directed the quartermaster.
"More. More. Hold her there."

The liner drew closer as the submarine forced her way toward it. It seemed as if the steamer were being drawn forward by invisible ropes. On the bridge Schroeder could see the figures of the officers like tiny wooden people on a child's toy. Little by little the great white letters took form.

"The *Olaf Horsa*, of Christiania," Schroeder read. He reached for the signalling lever and rang for half speed. "Bring her up awash," he commanded.

The prisms of light showed through the portholes as the conning-tower rose above water. The motors slowed in their whining note. The commander picked up the telephone again.

"Notify wireless," he ordered, "that there's a steamer to starboard. Let him signal her to lay to, and to seal her Marconi key. Empty ballast tanks. Pipe gun crew on deck. Stand by in torpedo-room. Go slow. Go dead slow. Stop."

He stepped out of the conning-tower, and into the steel alleyway. Bluejackets dodged past on their way above or to the torpedo-room. Somewhere a whistle piped shrilly. He picked his steps up the manhole ladder, unhooking the megaphone from its catch as he went.

Three hundred yards away the big steamer rolled to the waves like a pendulum. Her bulk stood out like a great house in a flat country. Schroeder could see the group of gesticulating officers crowd together on the edge of the bridge. Along the shelter and saloon decks figures leaned over the railing and

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gaped at the submarine with distended, frightened eyes—stewards, passengers, seamen. Groups collected about the boat-deck and huddled together as if in fear. Other figures went through weird motions, like a calisthenic drill. They were tying on life-belts. Schroeder raised the megaphone to his lips.

“What ship is this?” he shouted.

Faintly and thinly the reply trickled in to him, like the spent echo of a drum.

“The *Olaf Horsa*, Christiania; Jansen, master.”

“Where are you bound?”

“Bound for Southampton.”

“What have you on board?”

“Passengers—for trans-shipment to Liverpool.”

“What is your cargo?”

There was a brief consultation on the bridge. Schroeder could see the officers argue together heatedly. The reply came in a faint monosyllable.

“Grain.”

Schroeder turned around. Amidships the disappearing gun had been raised from its miniature pit. The sun blazed on its steel surface as on a mirror.

“Give me the telephone,” he asked.

A bluejacket handed him the instrument with its length of trailing grey wire.

“Go slow,” he ordered. “Stand by in torpedo-room.” He turned to the helmsman at the newly-fitted jury-wheel.

“Bring her about,” he snapped. The bow of the submarine came around until it pointed directly at the liner. “Steady. Dead slow. Stop.” He raised

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the megaphone. His voice rasped like the buzz of a saw.

"Ahoy, *Olaf Horsa!* You have ten minutes to take to your boats."

The groups on the boat-deck gathered closer. Schroeder could see the officers stand like men transformed to stone. A figure detached itself from the group. Schroeder raised his glasses. The figure walked to the rail, shrugged its shoulders, leaned over, and spat in the direction of the submarine. It walked back, its arms folded. Schroeder's voice took on a note of rage.

"Do you hear? Ten minutes," he megaphoned.

An officer swung down the companionway of the bridge, and hurried aft. There was the ragged pipe of a bo's'n's whistle. Men ran to and fro along the decks. Figures gesticulated. A knot of people swayed and fought together on the shelter-deck. Some one jumped overboard, fell in a curve, and struck the water with a faint white splash. The wind brought tendrils of conversation, guttural, angry, appealing.

"One minute gone," Schroeder marked.

The boat-deck of the vessel swarmed with people like a hive with bees. They crowded about the smoke-stacks, and fought their way to the white bulk of the boats. They swayed and turned and seethed. The men at the crooks of the davits worked like maniacs.

"Four minutes gone," the commander said.

The aft starboard boat came downward slowly, the oarsmen pushing against the side of the vessel to

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keep from striking. Schroeder could see the colours of women's clothes in the bow. It struck the water with a faint splash. The forward boat dropped with a run and stuck half-way toward the surface. It swayed to and fro. There was a faint scream as three figures stood up, tottered, lurched, and fell overboard.

A hail from the ship came distinctly across.

"The forward port boat is stuck. The other won't hold all. Give us some time."

"You have got five minutes left," Schroeder bellowed.

The boat in the water began pulling frenziedly away from the ship. Men and women sprang from the one in mid-air, like little black objects being thrown into the water. Figures jumped from the decks and hurtled through the air like sacks. In the distance a woman began screaming, a high, piercing wail like the wind through rigging. Again the voice came from the bridge, hysterical, babbling, indistinct.

"Can't you see, damn you . . . impossible . . . a little sense . . . mercy, then. These people . . . seven hundred miles from land. How, in God's name. . . ."

Schroeder's heavy shoulders lifted. He turned aside and watched the second-hand of the chronometer pivot jerkily around the dial. The first lieutenant touched him on the arm.

"Look at the bridge," he said.

Schroeder raised his glasses. The officers of the liner seemed to be fighting together. He looked again with fresh interest. No, they were holding

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someone back. As he watched, a figure tore itself free of the group and dashed across the boat-deck, thrusting forward an arm as it ran. There was a long spark of red, a little haze of smoke, a faint cracking like the distant spark of wireless, the minute splash of revolver bullets dropping into the sea as they fell short, like drops of rain. Schroeder swung about viciously, his jaw thrust forward, his blue eyes blazing. He looked toward the gun.

“Send that bridge to hell,” he roared.

The knot of bluejackets about the nine-pounder sprang into action like mechanical toys. The gunnery lieutenant peered at the vessel through his binoculars.

“Three hundred and fifty yards,” he jerked.
“Angle of twelve.”

The gunner braced himself to his lever. The group of bluejackets crouched as if about to run. A booming crash, like a single beat on a giant drum rang out. A white fog of smoke floated along the submarine deck. Something red stabbed into the air for a moment. The bridge of the vessel exploded in a lick of yellow flame. Pieces of woodwork, bars of steel, dark masses like the bodies of men, flew into the air as though before a hurricane. A great silence seemed to come over the waters.

“Nine minutes gone,” the commander muttered.

The first lieutenant made a megaphone of his hands.

“Nine minutes gone,” he bellowed. His voice struck the air with a clang of brass.

Schroeder’s face became like stone. The eyelids

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closed. His mouth tightened. He reached for the telephone at his feet. The air about the side of the liner became black with jumping bodies. The water alongside her was spotted with dark, bobbing spots.

"Just like rats," said the first lieutenant.

The commander raised the mouthpiece to his lips.

"Fire one and two," he commanded.

There was an ear-splitting scream from the compressed-air cylinders. The submarine jerked slightly twice, as though it had been struck violently. There was the hiss of escaping air. Schroeder bent forward and looked into the trough of the sea. Two indistinct lines of foam bubbles showed vaguely over the waves. The swimmers in the water frantically opened two lanes.

"Fire three and four," the commander ordered.

As he spoke a muffled crash rang out. A second came. Geysers of water jutted up at the bow and stern of the liner. They sprang into the air as though from a gigantic hose, and fell again in a hollow thud. The steamer keeled over suddenly, like a wounded man. It swung back sickeningly, listed and stayed there, its decks at an angle of forty. The swell of her lurch travelled across the water like a tidal wave. The lifeboat spun dangerously as it was lifted.

The air-cartridges screamed again, and again a pair of slender foam streaks cut across the waves.

"That'll finish her," said the chief officer.

Someone on board the liner screamed in terror. Other voices took it up. The sound clove through

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the air in a high, agonised crescendo. It suggested to Schroeder people tearing their lungs apart.

"Just like pigs," said the first officer.

"Shut up," Schroeder growled. "There she goes."

The liner seemed to go up in the air in an immense pillar of white vapour and shattered wood. A crash like the discharge of heavy artillery vibrated across the water. She careened over, her stern high in the air, like a peak of rock sticking out of the waves. Metal, pieces of wood, water, stayed high for a moment and then began dropping.

"Got her in the boilers," the first lieutenant nodded.

The black stern of the steamer slipped into the waves as if some great hand had caught the vessel and was pulling her downward. The fan-like propeller showed for an instant like some grotesque sea-flower. It disappeared. There was a swirl of water, a patter of eddies and whirlpools, a seething of bubbles like soap-suds, a litter of wood chips, and then waves began forming again. Five hundred yards away from the submarine the first ship's boat pulled off, filled to the rowlocks with huddled, white-faced figures. In the distance another boat paddled with a scant three. Between them a life-raft hove and dropped on the waves, with a half-dozen drenched wretches clinging to her. Here and there a solitary head bobbed in the water.

The first lieutenant gazed soberly at the boats and the raft.

"Phew," he whistled, "not many left."

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In the nearest boat a figure raised itself in the bow and shook clinched, impotent fists at the submarine. Schroeder looked at it a moment.

“Rifleman Wolff,” he called.

The sharpshooter stood at attention.

“Get your piece and bring down that—No. Don’t mind.”

He looked at it a moment longer.

“Bah! Shark food!” he muttered. He swung about.

“Stow the gun.”

The nine-pounder disappeared into its pit. The shield closed to with a well-oiled click.

“Full speed ahead.”

The cough of the gas-exhaust broke out. The deck vibrated. Foam curled at the bow.

“Nor’east by north,” he ordered.

“Nor’east by north it is, sir,” the quartermaster chimed.

The boats aft became pin-points of white, became blurs, vanished. The blue sea rolled, and the sun flashed down on it and turned the crests of the waves to beaten silver. A gull dipped and spiralled overhead, and a breeze rambled southward, salt, fragrant, with a hint of pine forest.

So for forty-eight hours they beat their way toward the eternal magnet of the North, their foamy wake lying long and straight behind like a plough-line, their periscopes standing tall and gallant like lances at a knight’s knee. To starboard the green Norwegian coast lay in serrated ridges and in queer

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hidden bays and winding inlets. From the deck of the submarine, five miles away they could distinguish brown, slumbering villages and antique towns, and the delicate grey of corn ripening. Occasionally a coastwise vessel lumbered along, and when they saw one they dived discreetly. Here and there were the white patches of fishing-smacks. But no sign of the burly Russian vessels, nor of other contraband-carrying liners.

"We may raise something out of Narvik," Schroeder said. "We'll lie off the Lofodens and see."

As he paced the steel deck, a furrow came into the commander's face and the hint of a shadow into his eyes. He looked at the green coast-lines beneath focused lids, as a man looks at an enemy intent on his next move. He was a little worried. The country oppressed him. It gave him the impression of a distinct, more than human, entity, who knew what he had done to it, and was biding its time. He found himself visualizing it as an immense viking, armed, clad in shining greaves and cuirass, imperturbable, implacable, with all the cold, white fury of Northern men. He could imagine it flaying him—he shook himself with an uneasy laugh, but the feeling would not go.

As they drove onward, the sun went out of the sky, and clouds came up, black clouds, with the purple blackness of ink. A murky yellow spread over the water. A long, rising swell lifted in even, rhythmical movements. From the distant shore the noise of surf reverberated like muffled drums. Four

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sea-gulls chased one another wearily landward. A north-easter came up and whipped spray from the tops of the waves like steam.

The first lieutenant turned to his chief with a grave face.

"Don't you think we'd better submerge, sir?" he suggested. "I don't like that nor'easter, and the tide's pulling like a rope. You know where we are."

"We're off the Lofoden Islands."

"Well, sir!"

"Well, what?"

"There's a pretty dangerous current running hereabout. The Maelstrom's five miles to leeward."

Schroeder laughed.

"The Maelstrom!" he chuckled. "For God's sake, have a bit of sense. Stop listening to fo'castle yarns. The Maelstrom! The Maelstrom!"

The first lieutenant looked him square in the face. There was something queer in his eyes.

"Look at the sea," he said. "Look at the wave-height. See how low it is. It ought to be thirty inches higher. Watch!"

He took a silver case from his pocket and threw a cigarette into the sea. It floated shoreward as if pulled by a string.

"Nine miles an hour," remarked the first officer laconically.

"We'd better head her out to sea," Schroeder nodded.

The coughing violence of the exhaust stopped for a moment, began spasmodically, and stopped again.

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An officer dashed up the manhole and sprang aft. He made his way through the swirl of water on the deck and peered over the stern. He straightened himself with a jerk.

“Stop the engines!” he shouted.

The signal flashed down to the operating-room in a jingle of bells. The submarine rocked to the swell like a cradle. The commander hurried aft.

“What’s wrong?” he hailed.

“Propeller’s foul,” the officer at the stern snapped. “Bring the cage. Jump into a diving suit, someone.”

A gang of bluejackets ran aft with a scaffolding of steel mesh. A sailor in the grotesque bulk of a diver’s costume lumbered over the side and disappeared in an eddy of bubbles. The first lieutenant paced up and down the deck, his hands clinched until the knuckles showed white against the brown of the skin. He touched the commander on the arm.

“Better hurry,” he advised. “Look!”

The waves had nearly died down. They showed only in faint, jagged ripples, like the patterns of snow on ploughed ground. The water seemed black and thick, like oil. A mile and a half away land bulked, like a shadow. There was the thunder of surf on rocks. Occasionally there was a booming report, like the firing of nine-pounders.

The diver rose out of the waves, a horrible dripping monster. They unscrewed his headpiece hastily.

“A big fisherman’s net,” he gasped, “around the propeller. All afoul.”

Schroeder turned and shouted forward.

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"Get a knife and hatchet," he ordered.

The diver looked at him with a white, scared face.

"I can't go down again," his voice became a hoarse whisper. "I can't do it. There's something pulling, sucking. . . ."

The commander looked at him with a cold, murderous eye.

"You'll go down again," he said calmly. He raised his voice. "Hurry up with those tools."

"I can't," the man whimpered. "Good God! I can't."

A white shroud of fog suddenly enveloped them. It converted them into towering, shadowy figures. The submarine spun suddenly in quarter its length, as if the helmsman had thrown over his wheel. They lurched about the deck for an instant. The thunder of the surf came nearer. The booming, artillery-like discharges crashed more distinctly. The first officer stamped his feet in impatience. He cracked his fingers. He whistled, as to a dog.

The fog cleared like a stage-curtain lifting. Ahead of them an expanse of black water spread like a village pond. To the right and to the left, a mile away and apart, islands reared like huge rocks. In front of them, across the expanse, a dim mirage of land showed. As they looked, the water broke into a pattern of eddies. Lines formed, as on the surface of a harbour in a catspaw of wind. A vast throaty gurgle shivered through the air. The bottom seemed to break in the water. It curled about in a small, in a large, in a gigantic, funnel. Something appeared on the edge of it, grey and brown. The

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submarine glided forward easily. The men on the deck had the impression of slipping along snow on skis. The grey-and-brown thing took form. They could see it was the battered hulk of a fishing-smack. It spun around in a flashing circle like a racing-car on a stadium track.

The first officer looked at it with a twitching face.

"All below," he shouted. His voice broke into a scream.

They plunged toward the manhole in a frantic rush. Schroeder's hands shook as he lowered himself. The manhole came to with a clang.

He picked his way toward the conning-tower with faltering feet. The alley tilted slightly under his feet. A feeling of dizziness was coming over him. He became suddenly cold and his heart seemed reluctant to beat. He clambered into the control-chamber. The deck tilted. He held on to the stanchions for support. The engineer lieutenant clawed his way forward.

"Empty the air-tanks," Schroeder commanded. In the silence of the steel husk his voice sounded with horrible loudness. "We'll sink."

There was a violent jerk, as though an explosion had occurred against the hulk of the submarine. She turned about suddenly, like a wheel. Schroeder felt his head strike the iron of the wall. He slid to the floor in a crumpled heap.

"Open the other side, you fool," he shouted. Nobody answered.

The submarine spun about like a teetotum. Schroeder felt himself being thrown here and there,

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like a limp sack. There was the crash of things falling everywhere, the rattle of earthenware, the tinkle of steel, the resounding clang of brass. The odour of oil floated sickeningly around. There was the acrid tang of acid. He felt his head knock against the wall again. A feeling of nausea came over him.

He lay for a moment stunned, and, as he moved again, little visions, like queer, scrappy biograph pictures flashed in and out of his head. He saw the water about the *Olaf Horsa* black with bobbing heads. He saw the bridge of the steamer disappear in a yellow crash. He saw the man shaking clinched fists at him from the bow of the lifeboat.

"War," he muttered to himself. "After all, it's war, isn't it? It's war."

Someone came hurtling down the alleyway, screaming as he ran. He tripped over Schroeder, picked himself up again, and lurched away. His voice broke out in horrible, tearing spasms. Schroeder remembered vaguely having heard that sound somewhere before. It was the death-cry on the Norwegian liner. The memory struck him with the force of a blow.

A little water trickled from somewhere and splashed on his face. It became a stream. It rippled metallically on the steel of the alley as though splashing into a zinc pail.

The thought that had been haunting him all day on his bridge flashed up in his mind with the blinding quality of a calcium light. Norway had him. Norway was taking its revenge. The mighty viking in flashing armour held him at its mercy. It was

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buffeting him, crushing him, throttling him with white, implacable fury.

He put his hands to his collar and tore it open savagely, and, throwing his head back, he began howling, suddenly, loudly, insanely, like a trapped wolf. . . .

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IF you ask any one on Sixth Avenue where to find a pawnshop, he will give you the addresses of two or three; "but," he will warn you, "keep away from Larson's, for you'll be skinned there. That guy's the original Shylock, with a few new things thrown in."

And if you knew anything about the psychology of things, one glance at the window of Aaron Larson would convince you that your Sixth Avenue informant knew what he was talking about. Under the three weather-beaten, fly-spotted brass balls, whose tawdry gilding suggested bedraggled finery, the window of Aaron Larson stretched in a repulsive rectangle, protected by iron bars that would have done service in a prison. There was an indescribable air of pathos about the window, lacking in the other pawnbrokers' windows on the avenue. The trinkets, the watches, the score of wedding rings strung like onions, the rusty heap of workmen's tools in the corner, the battered violin on top, the camera, the glasses, the boxing-gloves, all gave the impression of having been the sentimental companions of the poor devils who had pledged them. You knew that they had been

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let go only when every other means of getting money had failed, and from each of them you could reconstruct a story of heartbreak and sordid tragedy, as a sculptor might reconstruct Hercules from the splinter of a marble foot.

Inside, the shop was dark and gloomy. Around it hung a sort of perpetual half-light—a dispensation of Providence, not a tactful foresight of Larson's—which covered the drunk and the bum and the down-and-outer from the glaring shame of daylight. In the corner a massive green safe rose like a citadel. Beside the counter, on the glass partition of a private desk, was hung the mayor's licence to conduct a pawnbroking business. Around the walls of the shop stood wretched daubs of landscapes in frames of gorgeous gilding. Above the scales for the weighing of wedding-rings, was perched, in a glass case also, an oil portrait of Gustav Larson, founder of the business, an old man with the flowing white beard of a patriarch and the mean eyes of a rat. There were no partitioned cubbyholes in the shop, as there are in other places, for the use of the timid and the ashamed. There was no need for them in Larson's. People who came there to pawn keepsakes and sentimental reminders were too scarred and battle-hacked in the fight with poverty to care for fine emotional things like shame, and timidity and self-respect.

But the grimdest of grim things in the shop and the most sordid of all things sordid was the owner, Aaron Larson. You could see only the head and shoulders of him from the front of the high counter.

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You saw a rather large, close-cropped black head, with beady black eyes, a sizable nose, a mouth closed like a sprung trap, a prominent jaw. You saw a pair of heavy shoulders and a bull neck. You saw a natty collar and a rich tie with a stickpin that insulted your poverty. And you got the impression, from the black eyes that regarded you with a contemptuous suspicion, and from the closed mouth with the thin, bluish lips, that you were looking at something carved in stone, something supernaturally insolent, horribly evil.

“It’s not that I mind putting up my wedding-ring,” little Mrs. Kauser, who did occasional chartering in the offices of Forty-second Street, used to remark. “I’m used to that. But it’s the way he handles it, as if he was pleased to see me down and out and having to come to him for the price of a meal. I never see his hand reach out for it but I want to snap it back. But what can you do? It’s the only place they’d take it.”

It was by accepting the keepsakes of the down-and-outers that Aaron Larson made his business a success. Things that no other broker would take he accepted, certain that interest would be paid on them to the day of the pawnbroker’s death: little silver lockets with wisps of brown or black or white hair in them, wedding-rings that a couple of dollars had bought when new, the violins of old musicians, the dress-clothes of broken gentlemen, the sentimental trinkets of spinsters given to them by lovers of ten, twenty, thirty years ago.

“It isn’t jewellery or clothes or keepsakes that you

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pawn in Larson's," said old Monsieur Chénil, who had been paying interest on a cross of the *Légion d'Honneur* for nine years; "it is your heart and soul."

And so, little by little, cent by cent, quarter by quarter, the wealth of Aaron Larson mounted up. There were windfalls in the business occasionally—rewards offered for captured crooks who came to pawn stolen goods, and cut-throat prices paid for stolen goods which would never be redeemed. And then, little by little, the business ceased being a matter of money to Aaron Larson, and became a great game. The thug, the pickpocket, the burglar, the stick-up man, found their equal in nerve and cunning in him. For the weak, for the broken, for the down-and-outer, he had no sympathy. Life he saw as a grim battle with no holds barred, and the coward and the undersized and the timid had no rights there, according to his grim Sixth Avenue philosophy.

If you passed along Sixth Avenue and looked into the shop-window, you might have seen his face gazing out of the corner, a big, thin, deeply lined thing of white and blue. It would have cured you of any desire to enter. If you were hungry and had to pawn something, it would have cured you of any desire to eat. It suggested too much an animal waiting in its lair for a victim.

Callahan, "the honest cop," passing on his daily beat in front of the store, would look at the white patch of face in the window and would relieve his disgust in deep, horrible, malevolent curses.

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"By God!" he would mutter, "you damned kike, you dirty bum, just give me a chance to pinch you some day, and see me go to it!"

With a look of contempt, or a look of covetousness, or a look of professional interest, in his eye as he kept watch, Larson saw the dwellers along Sixth Avenue pass. Many of them looked bedraggled, as if they had come out of a mental or physical or emotional debauch. These were the down-and-outers, the puzzled, the broke. Occasionally a smartly dressed "con" man went by to his haunts in Herald Square. Occasionally a painted woman with garish finery flounced past, and Larson's lip curled as he looked after her.

And then, one day, like a breath of spring air along the avenue, came the "singer woman," as Larson contemptuously called her. The "singer woman" was tall, fair, handsome, and moved along the street with the dignity of a king's daughter. It was the pimply-faced assistant, Koehler, a lad of eighteen, with the thick lips of a sensualist and the shifty eyes of a crook, who first noticed her.

"There's a fine bit of stuff!" he mused enthusiastically. "Good shape and nice action. Oh, you sweet one!"

"Get on about your business," Larson had snapped. "What do you think I'm paying you for—to stand at the window and rubber at women?"

She interested Larson, however. He noticed carefully all the items of her appearance: the metallic shimmer of fair hair that showed from under the brim of her *chic* little hat, her low brow, her intensely

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blue eyes, the finely chiselled nose and chin, the delicate oval of her face, the tinted ivory of her complexion, the flowing lines of her figure beneath her loose grey costume, her neat grey shoes. There was something about her face that Larson could not understand, but that he nevertheless appreciated. It was an expression of spirituality, the expression of some one who sees a satisfactory goal ahead and who is satisfied to arrive at it in spite of all obstacles. He gave her the name of "singer woman" from the little leather music-roll she carried. She must live somewhere in the Thirties, he imagined, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, and she was probably going to one of the numerous studios of singing instructors that abound about the Metropolitan Opera House.

"Damned fool!" muttered Aaron Larson, for he had a wholesome contempt for everything in the nature of the fine arts. "Why don't she get married and work?"

But there was little sign of the singer woman getting married and working. For six months, regularly, every day, excepting on Sundays, she passed by the shop with her long, rapid, easy step, with her head held high and her music-roll in her hand, and every day Aaron Larson saw her pass with a look of sourness on his face that betokened his dislike of women in the arts and in economics. Sometimes when returning from her lessons she was accompanied by a dark, suave, burly man. Larson, with a fine eye for detail, took stock of the close-shaven, massaged look of his face, the sporting cut

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of his clothes, the hair whose waviness hinted at long hours in a hairdresser's shop, the slightly theatrical manner. He snorted with contempt.

"I wouldn't give that guy a dime on a thousand-dollar watch," he thought grimly. "He'd sting you some way."

Larson noticed him paying a thousand compliments to the girl as they walked along the avenue, and all the time watching her calculatingly out of the corner of his eye. Larson diagnosed him as a concert-manager or as something connected with the theatre, and looked on at his manœuvring with the contemplative interest of a philosopher to whom human nature is a few words already learned by heart.

But evidently the singing woman did not know human nature. She walked along beside the dark, burly man, who had the sort of sinister handsomeness that dark, burly men usually have, and she smiled up to him with that honest, interested, hearty smile of laughing eyes and open lips which she would give to any one whom she liked or was interested in. And the burly man smiled back, and his eyes looked lazily and caressingly on the singing woman all the time, and the singing woman did not notice.

"Damned fool!" Aaron Larson criticised her again. He shrugged his shoulders and his mouth twisted in contempt. "They all are."

Summer passed into winter. The fetid odours, the driving heat, the languid passers-by of Sixth Avenue, disappeared. Snow came, and hard frost, and driving rain. The umbrella man stood at the

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corner with his load of cotton obelisks. The chestnut vender dragged along his glowing furnace. The restaurants, the theatres, the cabarets, flung out their yearly challenge to the sky in great white letters. Over in the trenches of Flanders Europe still battled, and along Sixth Avenue, down toward Herald Square, great armies of broken men floated like windrows. Pale, emaciated things with blue circles under their eyes and unrecognizable rags on their backs stopped you and told heart-rending, incredible tales of abstinence from food. Ghosts of women scurried along, pale, gaunt, wild-eyed. There was penury in the air, and tragedy, and Aaron Larson thrived.

The singing woman still went down the street, but the spring in her step was broken, like the mainspring of a watch. The look of a goal seen far ahead and worth a thousand miles of thorny roadway was wiped out as if by a sponge. Her head was no longer high; it hung forward wearily. Her shoulders drooped. The corners of her laughing mouth were turned downward. The music-roll was no longer swung to and fro as she walked. It hung listlessly from a listless hand. Aaron Larson, who knew, from looking out of his window, the thousand steps of the road from affluence to destitution, noted that her suit was an old one, that her hat sagged at the rim, that her shoes needed resoling. Few outside himself could have told these things, for everything about her was neat and trig. But Larson had not been a pawnbroker for fifteen years without being able to notice every one of the finger-prints of want. He

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recognised poverty as a surgeon recognises a disease. He knew that poverty was beating down the singing woman as a boxer beats down an opponent. There came a day when he knew she had eaten scantily.

"Why doesn't she get married?" he said with an impersonal wonder. "Then she would have a meal-ticket. Damned fool!"

The burly man still walked beside her. The winter did not seem to have treated him unkindly. His fleshy jowl was as firm as ever. His heavy winter overcoat advertised affluence. He had the arrogant, swaggering walk of one who is sure of his next meal, and of the next week's, and of those of many weeks to come. Half-frozen bums at the street corners looked after him with bloodshot, murderous eyes. His attitude toward the singing woman had changed too. He had the comfortable, confident look of the covert shooter who knows that within a short time the bird will volley upwards directly before the muzzle of his gun. Larson noticed that the attitude of the singing woman had also changed. She no longer looked up at him with her easy, comradely smile. She appeared self-conscious, uncomfortable, afraid. She hurried along with her eyes shifting from right to left. Her lips moved in monosyllables in reply to his easy-flowing conversation.

"That big bum," Larson hazarded to himself with a contemptuous, awry twist of the mouth, "ought to be in Sing Sing." And he turned with a shrug of his shoulders to berate the pimply-faced assistant for laziness.

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A period of affluence came for the singing woman, when her step lightened up again, and the grim triangle about her mouth disappeared. She swung past the shop as jauntily as ever. The music-roll oscillated to the rhythm of her walk.

"Must have made a touch," Larson guessed. "She's got kale from somewhere."

And then suddenly, like a paralytic stroke, the light went out of her face, and the swing out of her walk. Her eyebrows furrowed, and into her blue eyes the puzzled look came again, the look of a rabbit when the beagles are cutting it off on the turn.

"Up against it!" Larson said to himself. "Serves her right! Singing! She ought to be singing to a couple of kids. Damned fool!"

The burly man appeared again, with the regular entrance of a theatrical villain. He seemed to have considered he had waited long enough. Larson watched with interest the suave, bland gestures, the insinuating pose, the eager look in his calculating eyes. The pimply-faced assistant had seen it, too.

"Gee!" he remarked, with admiration in his voice, "that's certainly one wise guy. Bet you a buck he puts it over."

"You get out of here. Do you get me?" Larson barked at him. "What do you think I pay you for? If you don't want the gate on Saturday, you'll keep those books up to the minute. Go on, now, or out you get!"

Two days passed. The terror in the girl's eyes deepened. Larson saw her suddenly break away from

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the man in the street, her face suffused with red. The next day he saw the man walking beside her, his back bent with apology, but with the mean, the calculating, the watchful look in his eyes. A little crescent of blue showed above each of the singing woman's cheek-bones, and her face became drawn and haggard. She walked slowly, as if she were tired and weak. Once she looked at the window, at the door, and at the three globes of the pawnshop, and then she passed on with a quickened step, blushing furiously.

"Ain't got the nerve," sneered Larson from behind his window. "I should worry," he added with his usual shrug of the shoulders.

He saw them walking together on the other side of the avenue that afternoon, the man radiating prosperity and confidence, the singing woman with the expression of hopeless defeat in her eyes. Larson saw them stop at the corner, and the burly man nod westward toward Broadway. He knew that the burly man was suggesting a restaurant. The woman's face brightened as if a ray of sunlight had fallen across it. The burly man leaned forward and said something. The woman flashed over the street away from him like a startled animal.

"Why didn't she play him for the eats, any way?" Larson muttered, with an annoyed note in his voice. "Damned fool!"

In half an hour the door of the shop swung open, and she entered. Her face was red from embarrassment and shame. She took in the grim outline of the office with a half-scared glance. With trembling

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fingers she laid a little collection of objects on the high counter. Her lips moved spasmodically, but no sound came from between them.

Larson looked at the little collection with scornful suspicion. There was a watch of gold worn to the thinness of a dime. There was a long thin chain of gold, too, hardly thicker than a thread. There were a couple of silver-backed brushes, a mirror, and a nail-file. Larson saw her shiver slightly as he picked them up, glanced at them contemptuously, and threw them back on the counter. She cowered into the shadow.

“Two dollars,” Larson snapped.

“Can’t you——” she began. Her voice was hard and dry, as if her throat were like leather.

“I can’t. Two dollars. Take it or leave it.”

He saw her nod nervously and was preparing to go to the desk and make out the ticket.

“Is this any good?” she asked. Her voice came in a hoarse whisper. She held out a worn wedding-ring.

Larson held it up to the light a moment, and weighed it tentatively in his hand. It was old—probably her mother’s.

“Fifty cents,” he offered.

A sort of stifled sob came to his ears. He looked toward her. She was standing bolt upright, and if she were crying she was making a game effort to conceal it.

“Wait a moment. I’ve got something else.”

Larson knew she was tugging at her finger behind the counter. He moved uneasily from one foot to

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the other. The sound of the sob struck him again, like a gasp of surprise. She held something over to him.

It was a ring, and as Larson looked at it he saw it was of silver, tarnished by wear. A blue stone winked dully from an intricate maze of metal-work. He carried it to the window and examined it. He looked up. Her hand was nervously tapping the counter. Her eyes followed him anxiously.

"Where did you get this?" he demanded.

"A friend—an uncle—gave it to me. He brought it from Europe. Is it worth anything?"

Larson held it up to the light. The blue stone shone with a steady light as the sun trickled in through the window. Larson ran his finger across its dull surface. His brows knotted hard together. He looked out of the window. Behind him he could hear her fingers beat a nervous tattoo on the counter.

"It's an antique ring," he drawled slowly. He looked at it again. "It's worth a good deal. How much do you want on it?"

"Could I get twenty-five dollars?" Her hand closed on the counter in a grip of desperation. The furrows about her mouth deepened. Her eyes seemed to shimmer with intensity.

"All right." The snappiness crept into his tones again like a cold wind. He went to the desk. "Twenty-five and two and fifty cents make—— You don't want to pawn the wedding ring, did you say? All right! Suit yourself. Twenty-seven dollars. Name? Lois Cumberley. Here's your ticket."

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The pimply-faced assistant began to take the things away. The door shut to behind the singing woman with a swish and click. Larson looked out of the window with a twist of contempt on his mouth.

“Damned fool!” he muttered again.

“Who?” demanded the assistant. He stopped with the watch and ring in his hands. Larson turned on him like a flash.

“You get on and mind your business, do you hear?” he shouted. “If you worked as hard at your work as you do at minding other people’s business, you’d be worth something to me. What am I paying you for? Go on, now! Never mind who.”

For the next week the singing woman passed the shop with her head held high in the air, and an air of quiet confidence on her face. She never looked toward the pawnshop. She avoided it patently, as a person avoids the sight of a place where he has done a shameful thing. Larson had often seen that attitude before. It amused him. The lines had gone out of her face, like creases out of cloth. The dull, blank, hopeless look had disappeared from her eyes, and they gazed ahead, bright and unafraid. Her footsteps tapped the pavement like the feet of a soldier on the march.

Larson saw the burly man dogging her path a block and a half behind, with the care of a detective shadowing a suspect. There was an expression of annoyance on his face, and a puzzled look in his eyes. His mouth was twisted ugly. The theatrical

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pose had disappeared. Disappointment and rage showed in every line of his swarthy features.

"She's got him rattled," Larson thought to himself. The situation appealed to his dry sense of humour. The unaccustomed sound of a chuckle coming strangely from his throat startled the pimply-faced assistant.

One afternoon Larson saw the burly man step from a corner as she came along. His hat came off with a sweep. His eyes looked at her with dumb apology. His hand went out as if to stop her.

"The villain repents," Larson sneered. "The show will soon be over. Curtain!"

But the pawnbroker was wrong. The singing woman took in the bent, burly figure, the doffed hat, the outstretched hand, with a glance of ineffable scorn. She swung about on her heel. She marched back along the avenue with her face aflame, her head tilted high, her eyes blazing. The burly man looked after her, with his hat still off, his back still bent, his hand still out, a sort of startled wonder on his face. There was something unspeakably ridiculous about him as he stood there, something grotesquely comic. A couple of men standing outside a saloon laughed boisterously as they watched the incident. Larson started as he looked, as an audience starts at an unexpected twist in a play.

"Gee!" he gasped. "What a pass-up! Wasn't that fierce? Beat it, you big bum! The can's tied to you."

He saw no more of the burly man. The singing woman still walked along the avenue with her black,

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cylindrical music-roll. Little by little the hunted look came into her eyes, first a faint wisp of vapourish cloud, then something grey and expansive, then something dark and threatening. Again came the lagging footsteps, the sagging shoulders, the dejected head. Again Larson recognized the weary walk that told of scanty meals.

"What are you going to do now?" he muttered, with the interest of a connoisseur watching a game. "Your hoop's hocked. You've got to get a new *spiel*."

But she came along the avenue that afternoon with her face lit up like a lamp. Her eyes shone. The music-roll was grasped with firm fingers. Her step was long and rapid, as if she were hurrying to somebody to tell them a story of unexpected and great luck. Her body was bent forward as she strode along, like the body of a strong swimmer breasting waves joyously. Larson had seen that look and that walk before. He had seen it when the ship of some poor devil had come in after many storms, when the awaited cheque had arrived after horrible tragic weeks, when the unexpected job had dropped out of a clear sky.

She swung into the office an hour later. The warm, soft, joyous look was still in her eyes. A flood of delicate colour mantled her face. Her mouth was opened slightly, and the breath came through her lips in little panting gusts as if her excitement had not yet subsided. She laid her grey and red pawn-ticket on the counter with a gesture of triumph. A roll of crisp, clean bills, like newly laundered linen,

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showed in her fingers. Larson eyed her with his look of eternal contempt. He figured on the ticket with a stub of pencil.

"Twenty-seven dollars and eighty-one cents," he snapped.

She paid it over.

"Thanks ever so much for lending me the money," she burst out.

He looked at her in a sort of pained surprise. Formalities like these were not usual in a pawn-shop.

"Yeh," he acknowledged wearily. The pimply-faced assistant brought the watch and ring and brushes from the vault and dumped them with a studied carelessness on the counter. Larson opened the parcel and pushed them toward her. She looked at them as at buried treasure unearthed after centuries.

"I'm so glad to see them again," she said simply, a little tremor in her voice.

"Yeh," Larson repeated dryly.

"I'm glad I could get them out so quickly," she went on. She seemed surcharged with pleasurable emotion and to want to talk in an effort to give vent to it. She smiled, with a quick flash of blue eyes and of white teeth. "I had a great piece of good luck to-day—got booked for a concert tour. It means everything——"

"Yeh," Larson broke in wearily. He walked off to the window and resumed his steady look-out on the street.

"Damned fool!" he thought to himself. "Can't keep her mouth shut."

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She walked out of the door. A little shadow of resentment showed on her face—she didn't like to be snubbed by a pawnbroker. She suddenly broke into her flashing smile.

"I can't feel angry to-day," she said to herself, "not even at that." Her shoulders lifted in a little shiver of repulsion. "But isn't he the grimdest, the most horrible, the most detestable-looking thing on earth?"

The singing woman—they called her the *prima donna* now—had finished "*Carmen*" in the great yellow-brownish house on Broadway. In front of the fallen curtain the audience still applauded in great volleys of clapping that resembled the thunder of artillery. The singing woman was making her way to her dressing-room. Through the dismantled scenery her secretary came picking his way. Besides him towered a tall, venerable figure in evening clothes, with smiling eyes and a white beard, fine like silk.

"Miss Cumberley," the secretary said, "will you permit me to present to you Monsieur Stephani, the famous lapidary?"

They chatted for a few moments. Suddenly the singing woman drew a ring from her finger, a ring of intricate silver-work, with a blue stone that winked dully.

"Monsieur Stephani," she said as she reached it toward him, "I was once told that this was a very valuable ring. Perhaps you can explain to me why."

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The great lapidary took it from her. He ran a sensitive forefinger across the blue stone. He smiled in that gentle manner of his.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, *mademoiselle*," he said, "but I am afraid that your ring is worth very little. Perhaps five dollars. Perhaps less."

Her eyebrows knitted a moment. Then she laughed, a nervous, puzzled little laugh.

"Why," she smiled, "I had for years been comforting myself with the idea that if I ever got hard up I could pawn it and live on the proceeds for months."

"It is too bad to spoil all your illusions, *mademoiselle*"—Stephani shook his leonine head—"but the merest amateur in jewellery could tell that it was worth very little, and pawnbrokers are a very careful and very experienced race. I am afraid it would be impossible."

A little shiver ran through her. She remembered, with the vividness of a black and white painting, the lean days of three years ago, the bleak, comfortless look of Sixth Avenue, the wet underfoot, the gnawing hunger in her vitals, the weakness of her knees, and, by her side, the swarthy, burly beast, the beast with the insinuating tongue and the leering eyes.

"But perhaps," broke in Stephani, "it has a sentimental value."

And she remembered, too, the contemptuous-looking pawnbroker, whose shop she had gone into in fear and trembling. She remembered his thin, grimly lined face. Her heart went out to him suddenly

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in a great flood. A little moisture came into her eyes, and in her throat a lump was rising.

"It has," she answered. She put the ring back on her finger with a gesture that was a caress, "It has a very great sentimental value."

VI

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SHE settled her spectacles on the bridge of her nose, fumbling with them for an instant, and turned to examine the paper she held in her hand. "The People of the State of New York," she read, "by the grace of God free and independent, to Johanna Trevor, Greeting!" and after that in bald, unmistakable terms, the dispossess notice. She read it through two or three times, so hard was it for her to believe. They were putting her out of the shop, and all because, they said, of a leak in the roof! The shop in which she had worked for thirty years, and for which, on the first of each month, come rain, come shine, she had paid her rent with the certainty of an automaton! They were putting her out of her shop because it was unsafe. The people of the State of New York, free and independent!

She looked quickly behind her, at the little tobacco store, dingy and brown, which she tended, and at the antique wooden Indian beside her—a quick, doubtful glance, as though she mistrusted they were still there, and then she looked up and down the street blinkingly. Right and left of her great buildings towered—a glaring hotel; a vast apartment house;

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a line of shining stores. Here, on one last piece of land, as it were, her own and two other shops, Mishkin the tailor's, and the second-hand bookstore Riemer owned, stood against the lapping tide of the great buildings. Farther down the street ran the grey line of the East River, replete with shipping, and across the way a well-shorn garden showed, inviolate by its owner's wealth, with two high chestnut-trees in which linnets sang. In the distance the dun grove of old Brooklyn mansions lay. Beside her, four doors up, a big ornate tobacconist's shone, seductive with its well-planned window and spacious interior. A few people passed by—a lascar going down to his vessel; a ship's chandler, important and somehow furtive; a longshoreman heavy-stepping and bent. In the centre of the way, a burly policeman stood like a statue, looking about him with a proud and truculent air. The old woman cowered slightly. The People of the State of New York!

She had known this was coming, or rather she had not, for she did not believe it possible. The landlord had spoken to her about moving three months before, when he had come across from New York to be paid the rent. A burly, sharp man, with a hatchet-shaped legal face, he had looked at the old woman shrewdly as she counted over the bills.

“You've got an opposition now,” he remarked. “Grandy's big place. Business good with you?”

“It's none too good,” she had admitted.

The landlord leaned forward and examined the tobacconist closely. He looked at the thin, shrunken little figure with its narrow, flat breast, so frail that

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it seemed as if a gust of wind might carry her away; at the bony, angular face; eyes of a kindly, faint blue, weak behind their spectacles; at the wrinkled cheeks and uncertain mouth and the bony, red hands. There was nothing to be afraid of here, but he might as well be diplomatic. A soft word saved the effort of a hard blow, and gave him a reputation for kind-heartedness.

"You never thought of moving, Granny," he said, "and trying a new pitch?"

"No. Why should I?" she answered. "I'm perfectly contented here."

"Well, to tell you the truth"—the landlord was speaking to her intimately, as though to a confidant—"the city doesn't like these three places here. The street is being built up on each side. They look bad, and they're not safe."

"My place," she asserted with pride, "is as good as the day it was built. No fault here."

"Well, I'm only telling you," the landlord nodded shrewdly, and went.

The next month he had been brisk and businesslike.

"I'm afraid you've got to go, Miss Trevor," he said formally. "They've been down on me."

"There's nothing wrong with the place," she had told him, but for the moment a queer tremor had run through her, making her heart flutter like a sail jibing in the wind.

"I'm afraid that won't help," the landlord had answered. "They're down on the place and they want it wiped out. I'm sorry for you. From the bottom of my heart I'm sorry."

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"That's ridiculous," she laughed—an uneasy, forced laugh. "They couldn't put me out. I've been here thirty years, nigh on thirty-one."

"They'll do it," the landlord told her. "They've no pity. I'm sorry for you. You'd better get a new place. I'm afraid I'll have to give you notice next month."

She had felt out of breath at that, as though a hard blow had caught her beneath the heart. But she had gone out to her chair on the sidewalk, near the door, and sitting down on it, she had abandoned herself to the sun, like a kitten. And faintly toward her had come the odour of the garden opposite, and the rustle of the chestnut-trees and the singing of birds. Again the river passed by, hurrying relentlessly, clamorous with sirens and the clanging of bells. The familiar sights of the heights filled her eyes—old General Armstrong getting into his carriage, assisted by his coachman and nurse; the little French countess pattering by, a frail, aged figure, with high-heeled shoes; a naval officer distinguishable in his mufti by his slow walk and the poise of his chest and head. All these certain things rose before her, as certain as the stars and the water beside her, and she, sitting there, was the most certain thing of all. And to think of her going away, of her not being there to watch these things, of there being nobody in a chair on the sidewalk by Granny's shop—that was as unthinkable as the sun rising at nightfall or the moon illumining the day.

She had been taken by the landlord's hearty sympathy, but Mishkin the tailor disillusioned her.

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Into his store she had gone as one ally to another. She found the bald-headed, sallow Pole pressing trousers with a huge goose. She waited an instant and began.

"They're going to put us out," she hazarded, "so they say."

The tailor spat on the iron to calculate its warmth.

"Well?" he demanded with his upward singsong.

"So the landlord said," the old woman went on. "Maybe they're only bullying him."

"Maybe they're what?" The tailor looked at her with closed, shrewd eyes.

"He said he was sorry himself," Granny concluded.

"Don't let him bully you," Mishkin had laughed in reply. "The big stiff! The one that's putting us out is himself. He wants to sell this place for an apartment-house, see? That's what he's been holding it over for. Now he's got a sucker and he's going to unload, see? He should worry!"

She had gone away very disquieted. She turned in to the bookseller for corroboration, blinking for an instant in that close, musty atmosphere, where books were jumbled on books like the stones of a ruined house. Riemer, a huge, paunchy man, unkempt, dusty, with a grey full beard, looked at her with a sort of contempt.

"They say they're putting us out because a big apartment-house is going to be built here," the little woman ventured.

"And why shouldn't they?" the bookseller asked sententiously. "The city must progress. These

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shacks go and great skyscrapers take their place. It's the law of progress—the law that dominates the world."

"But after thirty years," Johanna shook her head; "after thirty years, it's hard."

"Progress takes no account of sentimentality." Riemer raised his great head. "Neither your feelings nor mine—if I had feelings like yours—stand in the way of the world. Progress—the great law!"

She left the bookstore heartbroken, but once outside it the old feeling came back to her, the feeling that her place was here, as solemnly decreed as the rolling of the river beside her or the budding of the trees in the garden opposite. What would Montague Street be without Granny? There had been a tobacconist's shop in that place as far back as anyone could remember, and they couldn't take it away now, even as they could not move the East River to accommodate another avenue. She had even laughed at the landlord on his last visit.

"You've got to be going, Missis," the landlord had said with finality. "Out by the first of the month."

"You'll build no apartment-house here," Granny had answered him boldly; "not for a while."

"There's a leak in the roof. It's riddled," the landlord snapped. "And the house is tilting. It'll be condemned. Then you'll have to get out."

"There's nothing wrong with it," she fought back. "And I've got my lease."

"Well, I'll put you out," the landlord threatened.

And he had done it. This wisp of printed and typewritten paper between her frail hands was the

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instrument by which she was to be levered out of her place into God knows where. She sat and looked at it dumbly, with the life in her coming to a standstill, like a wind which commences unaccountably calm. For an instant the old woman thought that her heart had stopped beating and that death was on her. She stood up in a panic and slowly the blood came back to her cheeks; her hands ceased their trembling. Mechanically she made her way into the tailor's shop.

"They're putting me out," she said feebly.

"What did I say?" Mishkin asked her wisely. "What did I tell you? I didn't kick. What's the use? They'd get you anyway, see? Didn't I say so?"

"What are you going to do?" Granny inquired.

"I should worry!" the tailor answered gaily. He dipped a sponge in a basin and began to rub the coat he was cleaning with long, rhythmical strokes. "I got a little money in the bank, in the bank, in the bank! I'm going to Philadelphia to my son Sammy, who's setting himself up in the dentistry profession." He passed rapidly along the seams and continued his baritone singsong. "Fine business and fine people. All gold and porcelain work. No rough stuff, you understand, no pulling." He made a wry mouth of disgust. "I'll stick around and let in the people and arrange the magazines on the table, and maybe clean the instruments."

"And the shop?" Granny asked.

"The shop!" Mishkin laughed. "I should worry!"

The bookseller received her with his eternal contempt.

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"You're going this month?" Granny began.

"I am going," Riemer answered, "on the twenty-second instant. I have disposed of my stock for a reasonable amount to Shultz Brothers, reserving for myself a small selection of the better authors, to pass my leisure hours."

"What are you going to do?" the old woman asked blankly.

"I shall take lodgings near here," he answered, "convenient to the library, where I can go in and read, and attend lectures and examine the periodicals——"

"And the shop?" Granny interrupted.

"Of course I shall be sorry to leave that," Riemer pronounced, "for the selling of books is the most dignified of all trades, ranking with the professions. But it's progress, and I shall not stand in the way. It's a detail of the progress that has raised man from the status of the brute to the highest form of life on this planet——"

"I know," Granny nodded dully, and went out.

She entered her own shop now, opening the door that clanged a bell at the top, and she looked at every detail of it, as one might look at each feature on the face of a friend about to die. There was the counter with its crisscross of hacks and cuts, scars of thirty years and more; there her scales, true as the needle of a compass; and there behind glass cases were the piles of cigarette-boxes, green and red and yellow and gold. Beneath another heptagon of glass were the cigars, with their ornate boxes and their ornate

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Spanish names—"The Rose of the Lower Valley," "The Blossom of Borinquen," "The King of the World," "The Great Admiral." Back of that, on the shelves, was the tobacco for pipes, great black bars for the old-timers, and tin boxes for the anæmic smokers of newer days. And there were golden brown twists for men who chewed. There were queer brands in paper cases, old brands the men on the wharves liked, "Mechanic's Delight" and "Lincoln's Pride." Pipes snuggled in the faded velvet case, briars with amber stems and black composition ones; long clay pipes direct from Glasgow; an occasional meerschaum of fantastic shape, beer jug, or skull, or scowling gargoyle, and a few churchwardens. All about her were tin and cardboard plaques—gentlemen smoking in their Virginian homes; coloured men plucking the leaf in Southern plantations; plump Latin beauties with cigarettes between their lips—advertising brands gone into ashes and forgotten like the men who smoked them. Outside, the Indian chief with his chipped wooden nose invited the passer-by with a bundle of cheroots in his left hand, while his right held his native tomahawk, ready, it might seem, to defend the shop behind him. That silvered weapon was pitifully useless now.

The old woman leaned heavily on her counter, for she was feeling weak, and there was a great sinking in her heart as she looked about her, as there might be in the heart of some timid animal who sees its cub being carried off. Something crumpled crisply as she leaned, and as she raised her hand to see what it

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was, there again seared the sight of her eyes that exquisite hypocrisy—the greeting to her from the People of the State of New York.

An old woman now, herself, sitting like a cat in the sun, she could hardly remember a time when she hadn't been serving behind her counter or watching the sparse current of the street. Dimly, and very vaguely, like a vista seen through mist, she had the memory of the Scottish poorhouse where she had spent her girlhood. Her mother had died in a Glasgow slum when she was born, and her father had gone off soldiering and been killed in the Punjab. After they had let her out of the poorhouse, she had been a weaver's assistant in a linen mill, a galley slavery of ten years, the only memory of which was the whirring of countless shuttles. She had another relative, an uncle from whom she had never heard, her mother's brother who had gone to America. A dour man, she had heard, black-bearded and secretive, with one wooden arm. The live one he had lost in a scutching machine. He had gone away with the money he received as compensation for the loss of it. The few people who remembered him did so only because they disliked him so intensely. And then suddenly, one fine day, a newspaper carried an advertisement in its personal column telling relatives that something to their advantage would be heard on communicating with a firm of solicitors. Granny had applied and she was told that her uncle had died leaving her, his only living relative, the shop in Montague Street, Brooklyn.

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"I can remember that part well," Granny would say to herself with a happy smile.

Well she could remember—and how could she ever forget?—the ecstatic moment when the attorney had opened the door of the shop for her and given her a place in the sun, who had known until then only a pauper's pittance or the meagre wage of the mill—a place where she had been a minute human cog amid great machinery, a galley slave to metal Titans. It was as though she had been admitted to the singing tiers of Paradise.

"A wee place of my own," she had said simply, with tears in her eyes.

And so, for thirty years from that day onward, life had passed for her in a simple, ambling way. Dynasties fell, and monarchs died, and there were wars and rumours of war, but she measured snuff with a little shovel, or cut bar tobacco with a sharp knife, and sold honest cigars. In the mornings she would get up at seven to sweep the place out—there was a sitting-room behind the shop, and a bedroom farther back, and a diminutive kitchen. In fair weather she would sit outside the door in the daytime when no customers were in, and look at the garden opposite. And thirty years had passed somehow like a long summer day, before she noticed how grey her hair was, and how her cough was getting worse, and how at fifty-six she was an old woman.

They used to rally her about getting married, the people in the street.

"You've got a nice little place," they would say. "Why don't you pick out a man?"

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"Who would have me?" she would laugh back scornfully. And she believed it. But she often thought of the idea. Her ideal was a big hefty Scotsman, grim in the face and rigid of principle. She imagined him going about the shop, and relieving her occasionally,—or going off to work on the piers. That had been only a dream. All she had for company was the wooden Indian outside the door, a compact, stocky figure that a ship's carpenter had made for her uncle. Granny remembered it as almost new, when she came into possession, a fine brave thing in gold and silver and scarlet with little splashes of green here and there. Now, rain and wind had reduced it to a uniform drab colour, and the nose had been chipped, but to the old woman it was always new and commanding, and a sort of affection had grown up in her for it, stronger than she knew.

"It's lucky," she would say. She regarded it with a sort of superstitious reverence, as though it were one of those spirits whom masons set to guard bridges and great buildings; a sort of djinn, such as was at the behest of Solomon, the King.

And now, as she waited breathless for the finish of things, it occurred to her that this was all she had in the world. Mishkin had children—Sammy, the dentist in Philadelphia—and Riemer had his books. And all she had was a wooden Indian with a chipped nose.

Her mind suddenly began to review the years she had spent there, and she began remembering the people with the little shops who had lived in the

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street with her before the big buildings had come. Where were they now? There was Mr. Demarest who had kept the candy-store across the way where the Fairfax Hotel was now—a tall, sallow man; very silent. She remembered how the candy merchant would look longingly at the little children playing about, for he had none of his own, and give them sweets for nothing surreptitiously. His wife, a fat harridan, would find him out now and then and would attack him mercilessly.

And there was the cobbler who used to live beside Granny, a wizened atheist and a great one for arguments. Granny used to enjoy the rhythmic rattle of his hammer, and the odour of his leather. Where was he?

And the florist who lived down the street, the portly man who believed that flowers had souls. Often had Granny listened to him tell his weird stories of flowers that lay in ambush for insects as a man fishes from a bank; of flowers that moved from one place to another, like the rose of Jericho; of flowers that drooped and withered from grief when their owners died. A queer man, with over-long hair; what had become of him?

The little draper two blocks down, where was he? the draper with the horrible cough and the dour, forbidding wife. Granny remembered their place well, a dark store with innumerable spools of thread, and babies' knitted caps, and women's dresses on metal hangers. And where was the tall Swede who kept the shoe-shop? A great reader. And Sulzberg, the merry little Jew with the news-stand? Their

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places were gone and they with them, and now the street was filled with tall white buildings—apartment-houses to whose doors automobiles purred and flashed, and in whose vestibules coloured hall-boys lorded it with arrogance. Great stores rose where once little shops had been, filled with clerks who went about like so many machines. Where were the old-timers gone, Granny asked, with their humour, with their quirks, with their pungent personality? What had become of them? How did they go? Had they, too, received that deadly greeting from the People of the State of New York?

There were only two more days to go, and though she still sat in the June sunshine, she felt chilled to the bones. She took no more interest in the panorama of the street. Men came and went, and they seemed to her like grey shadows in an unearthly world. Occasionally someone pushed open the door to make a purchase and mechanically she served them, but the most of the time she spent outside, in frightful immobility. A new policeman had come on post, and the old woman felt her eyes being drawn time and time again toward the blue figure—a morbid, hypnotic attraction, like a bird being charmed by a serpent. Riemer had gone, and a great van had come to take his books. The bookseller had stalked out quietly, saying good-bye to neither her nor Mishkin, but walking off as if neither of them existed, his great paunch thrust forward, an umbrella clutched tightly in his right hand.

“And me knowing him for thirteen years,” Granny

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said bitterly, "and he never even waved his hand!"

Granny missed him, nevertheless, for the bookseller and Mishkin and she had seemed three allies against the terrible, relentless invasion growing all about them.

The old woman did not know how she had passed the last weeks. She had lain awake at night with her breath suspended, and when, after a few hours' sleep she had opened her eyes in the morning, terror hung over her like a disease. Queer, absurd visions came to her—of the mayor stepping in to save her, a great shining figure in a robe and chain; or of the landlord coming to her repentant and begging her to stay on. And at times, too, she would try to persuade herself that she was dreaming, and that soon she would wake up to find Montague Street smiling, and to hear the clang of the door-bell as the customers came in.

Only one thing happened to relieve the horrible monotony of those days. Grandy, the big tobacconist up the street, sent an assistant to see her, a tall, weedy fellow with jet black eyes and a thin mouth. He swaggered into the shop and looked around patronizingly.

"Hear you've got to get out, Granny," he said.

The old woman fixed her eye upon him and said nothing. The assistant made a rapid mental inventory of the stock.

"Thought I'd drop in and see if there was anything I might take over from you," he observed lightly. "Geel but you've got a bunch of old-time junk here!"

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Granny advanced toward him, quivering. Her thin forearm pointed to the door.

"Get out of my shop," she said with terrible dignity. "Get out of my shop."

"But—" the clerk protested.

"Must I call a policeman?" Granny's voice shook with rage. The assistant glanced once at her blazing eyes, and slunk out of the door.

To take over her stock! Granny thought bitterly. To take the pennies from her dead eyes! The ghouls!

She listened attentively. Next door she could hear Mishkin making final preparations to leave. The tailor was whistling gaily. In a few minutes he would be gone, and she would be left alone to face whatever was coming. A fit of trembling seized her.

A little girl came by, trundling a hoop. She stood and watched Granny.

"It's a hard thing, my dearie," Granny said to her, "and me here for thirty years!" The child ran away from her as though from a menace.

A customer entered the shop, clanging the doorbell. Granny made no move to go after him. The customer waited a minute. He stuck his head out of the door and called:

"Are you dead, Granny? Hi! Wake up! I want some tobacco."

"I haven't got any," Granny answered him. She didn't know what he was saying. She only knew she wouldn't go in, for fear of Mishkin going away without saying good-bye, as Riemer had done. The customer looked at her intently for a moment and walked off.

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Mishkin came out at last. He banged the door merrily, whistling all the time. He had on a derby hat and a sort of frock coat, and in his hand was a black bag, such as doctors carry. His shrewd face twinkled with good humour. He took Granny's hand in his.

"Good-bye, Granny," he said cheerfully, "good-bye!" He lowered his voice confidentially and winked. "Say, what are you doing? Holding out so as to make him buy you off? Say, I'm wise, I'm wise."

"No," Granny answered dully, "no!"

"Tell it to Sweeny," the tailor grinned. "Say, it takes the Scotch every time. What? Well, I'm off. Any time you're in Philadelphia, drop in and see me. You'll find the name in the telephone-book—Samuel Mishkin, D.D.S. Don't forget, Granny. We'll treat you nice."

"I thank you kindly," she nodded.

"Say, you ain't looking so well, Granny," the tailor broke in. "You ought to see a doctor. Well, I'm off. Don't forget now—Samuel Mishkin, D.D.S. You'll find me there. We'll treat you fine. Maybe I pull you out a tooth. What?"

And he was off.

Granny watched him go up the street, his bag swinging and coat-tails flapping a little. She walked toward the kerb to see the last of him. The tailor became a black speck in the distance, topped the hill, and disappeared.

The old woman went back to her chair and sat there an instant. She turned and looked at the two empty shops and a quick panic seized her. She felt herself suddenly alone on the whole planet, with

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everybody gone but her, and monstrous terrors threatening on every side. She rose quickly, as if to defend herself, with a wild question in her eyes. To the right of her she saw the wooden Indian standing bravely to front the world. She groped her way toward it, as though everything had gone dark and she could not see.

“Riemer gone, and Mishkin gone,” she said aloud, “and nothing left but me and it.”

A fit of coughing took her and suddenly it turned into a burst of inarticulate sobbing, low and hard and desperate. A couple of people stopped to watch. She laid her hands on the block’s shoulder.

“Only me and it,” she sobbed, “and they’re putting us out day after to-morrow.”

The bystanders became a circle. People spoke to her, but she paid no attention. The policeman from peg post crossed the street and broke through rapidly. The old woman caught the sign by the shoulders and spoke to it as to a man.

“After thirty years, my dearie. After thirty years!” And she broke down again.

The policeman took her gently by the arm and turned her aside. Gradually she became aware of the crowd about her. She looked at them with distended eyes.

“The People of the State of New York!” she cried in sudden terror, and then, crumpling up, she allowed herself to be led away.

Riordan, back to his beat from plain-clothes duty, dropped into the big tobacconist’s for a cigar. He

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chose two from the box which Grandy, the proprietor, tendered him with an ingratiating smile.

"Say, you missed something when you was away," Grandy told him.

"Yeh?" Riordan inquired.

"It was funny," the tobacconist laughed. "Remember that little old Scotch woman with the cigar store down the street? She went off her bean. They found her talking to that old wooden Indian of hers, just as if it was a human being. They took her away and dumped her in the bughouse."

"Talking to her Indian, eh?" Riordan grinned. He put the cigars carefully away. "Oh, sure! She must have been bugs!"

VII

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IN the kitchen, beyond the shabby, pretentious sitting-room furnished in green plush, where the Manchu gentleman, bulky, beautifully groomed, inexpressibly benevolent, sat talking to Pachico, the Canarsie Kid, the footfalls of Delia Baird would patter, now light as a squirrel's, now slow as a cat's, but all the time to some well-defined rhythm, as though in her mind a great orchestra played music she was dancing to.

The simian-faced gangster leaned toward Mun Sin. He smiled that utter leer of his.

"Some baby!" He nodded his head toward the kitchen. "The kid can pick 'em. The best looker in Manhattan, and some dancer—believe me!"

"Miss Baird," Mun Sin agreed, with that little lisp which will persist in his English until the day of his death, "Miss Baird is a very beautiful woman. Now, to go back to what we were talking about—"

"Well, you want to know how Dutch Louis got his." Pachico grinned. "The cops were after him all the time, and they had nothing on him—see? Though they knew as well as I did that he had pulled off that International Bank business—see? If they

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could only get him under the Sullivan Law, they could hold him. But Louis was wise—see? So he gets a kid to carry his gun. And the Happy Gang—see?—laying for Louis, gets hold of the kid; so you see. And sails into Louis, and what was left of Louis wasn't worth picking up."

Delia Baird came through the sitting-room, slender, brown-haired, warm-eyed, not yet twenty. Even in those days—and that was five years ago—before ever a stage was danced over by her, she had that mature look of womanhood, every slender line as clear-cut as a statue of silver, and in her eyes then, as in them now, was that look of terror that people cannot explain.

"Come here, baby!" The Canarsie Kid motioned her over. Mun Sin rose deferentially. The gangster caught her by the shoulder. "Some looker! How would you like taking her back to China—eh, boss?"

The Manchu gentleman's eyes glinted at Pachico with the quiet, hostile glance of a snake's. The Kid didn't notice that. He was holding on to Delia Baird.

"Well, it might be arranged." Pachico laughed and let her go. "Now, tell me"—Mun Sin turned the conversation—"how you killed Patsy Kerrigan?"

"That," Pachico admitted freely, "was a fine piece of work. But say"—he laughed—"every time you ask me questions like that I got to stop kidding myself I ain't dreaming. What are you doing—writing a book?"

"I told you," Mun Sin said patiently, "that I had come here to learn the art of murder, and that I wanted and would pay the biggest master in his line."

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Even in China now, the unchangeable China of Kublai Khan, the old order has passed away. And the China that San Francisco knew and that New York knew has gone with it. The hatchet man is dead as any old Crusader in his armour and panoply of war, and in New York, where the Tongs waged their battles, no longer slant-eyed, black-bloused men creep through the alleys at night with their heavy pistols up their sleeves. The Six Companies have no more got their captains and armed battalions to do secret warfare in the streets, and to practice what the Western World calls murder.

Perhaps the world has grown more honest since then, and, thinking in the straight line they always use, the yellow men have decided that there is no more need for the hatchet-man and the secret assassin. They feel that they can now bring their wrongs to the strange tribunal of the New World, with its foreign language and unknown oaths, and have justice done them. Or else why have they given up their time-honoured custom of dealing out justice in their own way? It certainly is not fear.

Now, when Mun Sin, of Macao, that big, bland genius, undertook the consolidation of the nineteen silk companies—as great a thing in its unknown way as any steel or oil combine in America—there still was a distrust of Occidental laws. The old silk companies refused to be misunderstood in courts, and relied upon their own conscience—no little thing when all is said and done—to decide the right or wrong of injuries and to mete out justice and law.

They sat around in solemn conclave, the five great

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men of them. Hsien Ping, of Hongkong, who is very old; Yang Ho, known as "Hu"—Chu Hsi, of Peking, in greater regard as a poet than as a merchant; Kang Chang, of Nanking, the youngest millionaire in China, and Mun Sin, big and bland, and striking a strange note in his rough Scottish tweeds among their brocades and fans and coral buttons.

"It is not dignified," insisted Hsien Ping, "to hire a butcher from the street to do justice on a man." He twiddled his fan and spoke straightly to them. "Among us there should be one who is responsible in this thing, who will control the fighters and the hatchet-men, and give them orders and know degrees of punishment."

"In other words, sir," Mun Sin said gravely, "you believe that some one ought to study methods in America, so as to be able to give orders and see they are carried out."

"I do," said old Hsien.

"Well then," Mun Sin quoted from the "Analects," "'the superior man will face an event and carry it through successfully.' I will undertake this myself."

And so, in due course, Mun Sin, of Macao, arrived in New York and, by devious means, came to school to killer Pachico, the Canarsie Kid, whom even Spanish Jake and Young Chinko consider a great murderer—which is a lot from jealous masters of their kidney—and he met Delia Baird, and one day he saw her dance.

We all, who have ever seen her dance—the brown and pretty little woman and the great artist that she

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is—have seen her on a huge stage with throbbing harps and violins and dim lights. We have seen in "Sumûrun," a little bronze figure vibrating with passion. We have seen her pure and wraithlike in "Les Sylphides." We have seen her outdo the pride of Russia in "Schéhérazade." We all know that she is great. But Mun Sin saw her in a dingy apartment on One Hundred and Tenth Street, dancing in a dark skirt and blouse to a barrel-organ grinding, from the shabby street below, the "Funeral March of a Marionette," and he saw Genius.

He had come up to the apartment, leaving his car outside, and unthinkingly he had pushed the door open—unthinkingly, because Mun Sin was the soul of courtesy, and not even on Pachico, the Italian murderer, would he intrude without knocking. He opened the door and stood still.

In step with the staccato, cynical melody, Delia Baird was going round the room with the faltering, grotesque movements of a doll—a wounded doll—and that, if you can imagine it, is more pathetic than a wounded animal. The strain changed to a wild abandon, and she gave three little transitional steps to the right and four to the left, and then, with a leap like a swan and a smile in her eyes, she began to whirl about the room in the graceful lines of the wind among the grass.

"Oh, I beg your pardon." She stopped as she saw him, blushing furiously. There was nothing Mun Sin, for all his courtesy, could find to say.

Pachico came up the stairs behind them.

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"She's been dancing, hey? Well, that's more than I can get her to do unless I give her the knuckles and the boots. Go on in," he ordered her, "and put on that gauze I bought you and show us what you can do. Do you get me?" His black, close-shaven, simian face glittered with anger.

"I will not!" The terror in her eyes struggled with a fierce spirit glowing within her.

"Tain't because she's so blamed ashamed," Pachico snarled, "but because she don't want me to see her dancing. I'll show her——"

Mun Sin interposed gently.

"Some other time." He bowed to Delia Baird. "You are a great dancer, Miss Baird, and you are going to get your chance to dance, I promise you that. In the mean time"—he turned to the Kid—"if we can go ahead with the talk——"

And so they went ahead, and Pachico, who really knew his subject, warmed up and opened his experience to Mun Sin, of Macao. He told him how John Regan died, and how the mysterious Westerner in the Prince Albert coat killed Hans Kellner in a hotel, in 1903—a thing the police would like to know; how Achmet Bey, the Syrian, "got his," in Pachico's quaint euphemism. He told him of the various thrusts and guards with the Italian stiletto. He told him that the safest place to kill a man was in a crowd if you were going to use a knife; from a taxi with a gun at night, if it were impossible to use the knife. He told him the best way to kill women was a hatpin through the eye and then close the lids, as though they were asleep. He told him of terrible things,

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like the Liverpool stranglehold, and blows in the Japanese style which kill instantaneously, though of these Mun Sin already knew. He told him of the incredibly filthy method of killing a bound man and leaving no trace. He was terse, vigorous, and to the point, and to all that he said, Mun Sin listened intently and silently and interestedly, as the disciples Yu and Chin listened to Confucius explaining the Doctrine of the Mean.

There is nothing to be said, I grant you, for this Pachico, but there is a good deal to be explained about him. His mother died when he was so young he could never remember her, and his father was electrocuted, when the boy was seven, for a particularly brutal murder. Pachico had his father's strain, but brains that his father never had, and an early training with "Tiger" Patello, of the Gowanus section, that reckless *mafista*, which stood him in good stead all his life. At nine, he already had one murder to his credit—a passionate, boyish crime.

He was passing a fruit store when he heard the proprietor miscall Patello. To insult the Tiger was more than blasphemy to the little hero-worshipper. He turned on the man, a gaunt, great-beaked Calabrian. His eyes glittered.

"What have you got to say against Patello?"

"What I got to say against Patello? *Ebbene*. He came down here this morn'. He ask me give 'em up fiv' doll'. I say wha' for—fiv' doll'. He say' give 'em up fiv' doll' quick, *corpo di Christo*, or—"

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Pachico looked at the gesticulating man with contempt.

“*Calabres!*” The man turned on him with a kick and “*Figlio d’un’ cane!*”

Patello himself could never have sprung so quickly with a stiletto. The words were hardly out of the man’s mouth before he was dead. Pachico was kept out of harm’s way among the clannish Sicilian people by the Tiger until the whole thing had blown by. One Calabrian fruit-dealer, more or less, makes little stir in the world; and besides, when Pachico came out of hiding, the witness to the killing was himself dead.

The second was known to the police—the drowning of a man at Coney Island. But at Coney Island the tide is strong and if you can’t produce a *corpus delicti*, you can’t prove a murder. The patrolman on beat had seen the victim pushed off the pier.

“But where is this guy?” Pachico asked brazenly.

“I’ll give you a straight tip,” Centre Street told him; “we’ll get you yet.”

Nor did they the third time, for the Canarsie Kid, as he was called, now that he lived for the present on Long Island and needed a name fulfilling his station, could prove that he killed the man in self-defence.

“What’s the use?” the police decided.

They didn’t mean it, but there was none. Now, surrounded by a gang, Pachico could have his weapons carried for him, could have himself driven on forays in taxis by trusted lieutenants. Alibis could be proven for him by terrified saloon-keepers. Depraved

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women and courtesans of the meaner sort flocked to him to pay tribute, and other women he forcibly took from their homes.

"Gee! The way I got that Baird kid was funny, honest," he told Mun Sin; "and yet it wasn't so blamed funny, either." And his jaw distorted. "A lot of money could be made out of her, if I could only get her to work. I seen her dancing a lot on the street on Third Avenue, Brooklyn. Her father was a rummy, and he's dead, anyway. Got fresh with one of my boys. She was only fifteen, and I picks her up. I seen this Maud Allan dance. You wouldn't think it, but I go to shows like that. Yeh, and Isadora Duncan. I went to see what there was in it and to talk to the guys about it. They tell me there's big money in it. So I sent her to school. And I'm right; she's an artist, I tell you, fellow. And now she goes back on me."

"She won't work?" asked the Manchu suavely.

"Oh, she'll work, but she won't dance for to put money in my hands. She says dancing is bigger than her and me together, and nothing doing. Listen, Jack"—he became earnest—"I've beaten her. I've taken the flesh off her shoulders. If ever a woman saw hell, she saw it, and she won't dance. I was going to give her the hot poker. Only, that would mark her up if she changed her mind—see? And I've put money into that job."

"But she may run away," suggested Mun Sin.

"She'll not run far. She'll get hers if she does, and she knows it. She's scared of that."

"You look on her as your property, then?"

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"Of course she's my property—what do you mean? Didn't I put good coin into her? Say, listen"—the Canarsie Kid leaned back and eyed the Manchu shrewdly—"why shouldn't you take her off my hands? You got plenty of cash."

"It might be arranged."

"Maybe not a question of money, eh? You got ships. Maybe some opium could be smuggled over. A fair exchange—see?"

"A fair exchange, at any rate." Mun Sin was knitting his brows.

"Sure you could do with it." Pachico was smiling. The bad investment was off his mind. He leaned forward and touched the Manchu pleasantly on the knee. "You Chinks are funny guys, but you're honest. You'll see that I get what is coming to me. Sure you will."

"I think I will," said Mun Sin, with his benevolent smile.

He had, with the gay permission of Pachico, taken her down to a hall, where she danced for him. Money had never been much of an object with Mun Sin; he knew too much about life for that. And where a matter of art was concerned, money was nothing. Against a background of black velvet, to a harp and flute and fiddle, she poured her soul out.

"She is the greatest dancer in the world," said Mun Sin to himself, and the quiet smile on his lips grew more benevolent and the glitter in his eyes harder as he thought of Pachico. "And she might have been lost!"

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I think it must have been the greatest thing in dancing history to have seen Delia Baird dance that day. As you and I see her now, she is trained. She is running, in a manner of speaking, to form, as much as genius can run to form. "Sumûrun," "Les Sylphides"—all dancers do those. But that day, Mun Sin relates, she danced subjects from her heart—"the Dance of Falling Peach Blossoms," she called one; "The Dance of the Returning Swallow," with its dips and swinging curves; "the Dance of Running Rivers," with now rippling, now rapid, now swinging, powerful movements. And the harp gave out its deep, throbbing notes, and the flute sang querulously, like a complaining bird, and the violin poured out strong music, as a flask pours strong wine.

The queer music finished on a long note, and her feet stopped gently, and the light went out of her eyes and her face. From a radiant creature she became a dejected girl, broken and brown and slender, with quivering mouth and clasped hands. She looked at Mun Sin, her eyes swimming with tears.

"What is it, my little lady?" the Manchu asked.

"I don't want to go to China," she nearly sobbed.

"But you are not going to China."

"Pachico said I was going to China, that you had bought me." She had crumpled to her knees and was sobbing aloud. "And I'm not that kind. O God, I shall die!" Her voice rose to a scream nearly. "I shall only die! Even now, I am married to Pachico. He said he would kill me if I told it. He wanted to have a hold on me if I danced." Her hands went

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before her eyes and her head forward on her bosom.
“O God, I shall die! I shall surely die!”

“My dear”—the Manchu brought her hands from her eyes and looked in them smilingly—“in Macao, in my home, there are women and children, and to bring you there would be to hurt them more than to hurt you. And I never wanted to bring you there, for I am not a cheap coolie, to huckster about a woman. And even Macao is a quiet old place with gardens and Portuguese Christians and hills and old market-squares—a backwash of the world. And the place for you to be is in the world itself. You will dance. That’s all I want.”

“You don’t want me?” She was incredulous.

“I do not,” he said gravely.

“But Pachico said you bought me.”

“I am going to buy you.”

“Pachico,” she broke down again, “is—married to me.”

“That is something I can settle also,” said Mun Sin, and the smile on his face might have been the smile of an old-time bonze meditating on the way called Tao.

Mun Sin, of Macao, is noted in the Celestial Kingdom for the excellence of his little dinners. They are not like Occidental dinners, when the guests sit about, pass laughing remarks, discuss politics, and perhaps tell a story about “Old Jim.” The friends sit upon the floor in many-coloured brocades and eat strange dishes, and fan themselves, and, as the conversation turns upon philosophy, a man-

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darin will take tablets from his pocket and, turning to his neighbour, give him a quotation to read from the "Analects," to which his neighbour will reply with his note-book, exhibiting a saying of Chung-tzu, and they fan themselves with their fans, and they look, as they undoubtedly are, very wise.

Wherefore it was the more notable to find Mun Sin sitting in the "chop-suey" of Yen-kow, in Mott Street, with Mike Pachico, the Canarsie Kid. It was the first time he had asked the killer out to dinner, and the killer was disappointed.

"Gee, the guy's cheap, after all," Pachico thought wryly. "He might have brought me to a regular joint."

But the dinner was so excellent in its way that Pachico forgot the lack of lights and glitter, and the glory that Sherry's might have given him.

"Care to have a drink?" the Manchu suggested.

"I never touch the stuff," the Kid nodded emphatically. "Nor dope neither." He was relaxing. The dinner was not so bad after all. The Chink didn't spare money. "The funny thing about me is I'm afraid of going mad. I'd rather have the chair than the bughouse any time—see? I'm not scared of getting killed. We all got to die some day—see? A quick bullet or even the chair. Though I'd never go to the chair."

"And why not?"

"Because I couldn't stand it. I'd go bughouse waiting for it. I've got somebody to slip me a gat and finish it quick. Say—tell you a funny thing. There's one more way for a guy getting his you ain't heard yet."

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Mun Sin leaned forward, once more the diligent pupil at the master's feet.

"I never tried it myself, because that's one thing I can't meddle with on account of the bughouse business. It's been tried a couple of times in New York—see? By Turks and Armenians—see? You get a guy you got a grudge against, and you take him into a cellar and you tie him up. And there's no light—see? And sit there with him in the dark. And he knows you're going to kill him—see? And he can't get away. And maybe you got a friend will help you—see? And you tell him you're going to give him his, perhaps in an hour, perhaps in a couple of days—see? And, gee, talk about the chair! There's not the proudest guy in the world whose nerves won't give under that stuff, mister. I'd go bughouse." The killer shivered.

The Manchu smiled benevolently. He leaned forward and pushed the quaint Cantonese teapot toward the Kid.

"Another cup?" He looked at Pachico, and his eyes were no longer benevolent. "Do you think that if I said I'd do that, that the man I said it to would believe it?"

"He sure would." The gangster nodded emphatically.

Mun Sin clapped his hands. Noiselessly, in felt slippers, two lean Cantonese entered the restaurant. Pachico looked up, smiling. He had the Italian's leaning toward the dramatic, and the Punchinello silence of entry of these bloused figures with the slant, sinister eyes, like the eyes of crocodiles, made him

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almost break into a hand-clapping of applause. He held himself in bounds, but the look in his eyes was full of tribute. "I get you," he added; "you're going to hand it to some guy."

"Do you think these men could take care of a matter like that?"

"Take care!" The Kid's eyes looked scornful. "They're bad Chinks, them two! They'd take care of anything. You can leave it to them, I know."

"Would you tell these men how to do that affair? They can understand English."

"Sure!" Pachico's eyes glittered with importance. "Listen, Charlie: You go get this guy the boss wants. You keep him in a cellar in the dark—see? Tied up. You guys can do it. The boss is going to tell him what's going to happen to him. And then, at the time the boss tells you, just—" He made a prolonged guttural sound in his throat, and drew his hand across it in mimicry. "They get me, don't they?"

"They do." Mun Sin's voice broke into the drawling South China speech. "Get him," he told them.

Swifter than cats and surer than bolts of lightning, the Cantonese were on top of the Kid. They held him with vicious hammer-locks. They pulled him to his feet.

"So you done me dirt, you yellow bum!" he snarled, but his face was a dirty, pale colour, like an old lime wall. His lips were blue. "You ain't going to do that on me? What's the use? Give me mine."

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His voice cracked like a faulty whistle. "I'll go bughouse."

"You will keep him there," went the fluting Chinese voice, "Hong Wah and Sing Lu, until he goes mad."

"And then let him loose?" Hong Wah's guttural tones inquired.

"No," Mun Sin's voice was decisive; "he might get well again. Kill him."

The bloused figures began dragging the killer away. He turned and shouted one last appeal. Already his mouth was twitching; his eyes were rolling.

"If you want the girl, you can have her for nothing!" he shouted. "You said you'd treat me square and pay me for her, but——"

"But I am paying you," said Mun Sin.

Morris Hoffman, fattest, greatest and most enthusiastic of impresarios, turned to the telephone.

"Ah, Mr. Sin, you were right, sir. She's the greatest in the world. I've handled them all, and I know. A great artist. We're getting down to work immediately. But, Mr. Sin——"

"Yes," came the lisping Manchu tones.

"She told me she was Mike Pachico's girl. The one they called 'the Killer.' To make him let her go you must have paid a fortune."

"I paid him for her—yes," said Mun Sin; "but I got her from him for next to nothing. A bargain-price."

VIII

THE BRONZE BOX

(I)

THE CHAPTER OF THE BROOKLYN ANTIQUARY

I

HE drew himself up until his immense shoulders spread like the sail of a ship. He gave a caressing pat to the great vase of red porcelain and gold and turned to the smiling woman in rough tweeds and hunting stock.

“That vase is, I think, worth twenty-five thousand dollars,” he said.

“How much to me, Jan?”

“To you, Rita, nothing at all. I’d be glad if you’d take it.”

She laughed, a low, easy laugh, like the throb of a musical instrument. Her teeth flashed like a mirror. There was something dim and misty in her round, brown eye.

“The same old Jan!” she murmured slowly. “If I’d taken everything you’ve offered me, Jan, you’d have been in the poorhouse ten years ago.”

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There is something intensely libellous about the word "antiquary." It summons up the picture of a small, fussy, bespectacled man with a mummy case in tow. One imagines him in a suit of rusty black, with a silk hat that is eternally unbrushed, reading musty pamphlets as he passes along the street; or in white linen and too-large puggaree, overturning rubble at the foot of the Pyramids, under the kindly shade of a burlesque umbrella; or going into ecstasies at the sight of a copper coin minted in the reign of Caligula. The man in the street avoids the antiquary as he avoids the philatelist, and the taxidermist and the undertaker. He refers to him affectionately and patronizingly as a "guy," and qualifies him as being both funny and old.

Naturally it would be a surprise for the man in the street to meet Jan Van Brunt. An immense presence of six-feet-two, heavy-bearded, with the build of a Mameluke—two hundred pounds of hard flesh and clean bone. Twenty-five years of strenuous work under every sky from the China Seas to the Brazilian pampas had hardened him to the consistency of stone. They had worked his features into a thing of brown granite from the beating of the sun and wind. They had dashed the heavy beard with grey and set silver flecks about the temples, but above all they had given him a look of calm confidence, of proved wisdom that showed in every lineament, from the great hawk's nose to the cool, watchful grey eye. One is tremendously impressed with Jan Van Brunt. One thinks of him somehow as

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an ancient Greek, clad in a single garment of white, its end thrown over his shoulder, instead of a modern flesh-and-blood New Yorker of honest Hollander stock, dressed in Fifth Avenue tailored tweeds.

Twenty-five years ago he had said good-bye to Harvard, with a piece of sheepskin in his hand and a banking-house career before him. He caught sight of himself in a tall pierglass in a hotel waiting-room. A sense of uneasiness stirred within him. He dashed into the nearest bank and looked at the iron grille; the cold, unfriendly, artificial stone; the pale city people hurrying in and out—tame sparrows caught in a snare. . . .

“But I want to move my shoulders and to breathe,” said Jan Van Brunt.

And that evening he had met Perry, the adventurer, the explorer, the soldier of fortune. Perry liked the bulky, serious university man. He talked to him about his future. He listened to the incident of the bank with an appreciative smile. He suddenly stretched out his arms and stood up.

“Got to turn in,” he yawned. “I start for Persia in the morning, for Ispahan. I’m going to dig up some jewels for Morgenstern. You can come along.”

“I’ll be ready any time you say,” said Van Brunt.

And so had begun Van Brunt’s career as a hunter of the rare and the old and the valuable. He fine-combed Japan for queer water-colours, screens, samurai weapons and armour; China, for vases of bronze and porcelain cunningly worked by master

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craftsmen, little idols of gold and wood, quaint, beautiful lamps. From Persia he brought stones of untold value, topaz blue like the sea, giant rubies, emeralds. From Turkey and Syria blades that had seen service at Acre. Unbelievably beautiful orchids from Burma and the Amazon. Great tusks of prehistoric ivory from Siberia. There were other things he brought too—things he never spoke of in the way of sale or of exhibition. There were the Singing Stone, and the Sword that Flowered, and reason-killing objects from the heart of Africa. Van Brunt was a wise man. He knew the pur-blindness that stone and mortar and iron girders breed.

He had hunted these things, not for the gain there was in them but for the great adventure of it. He had no occasion to complain of the money side of his vocation. He had sold his first trophies to Morgan, the old curio dealer in Brooklyn, past whose dimly lighted shop Fulton Street wandered on its way to the river. He had brought everything to Morgan, consulted with him about expeditions, accepted his commissions, and when the old man had at last grown tired and wanted a place to rest until he should die, Van Brunt had bought his business from him, and installed a couple of assistants, and gone off adventuring.

In spite of his easy-going methods, everything had prospered. Commissions had come in from millionaire collectors, from universities, from private endowments. Men liked to deal with him. They knew that his word was as good as his shoulders.

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They knew that his mind was as honest as his eye. And they knew he had his work at his fingertips. When it was a question of anything bought, made or found in the Near East or the Far East, no man knew more than he.

He liked his shop and he liked its location. There were few things in the window—a great bronze jar of immense value, and a pair of crossed Japanese pikes. Above the door the motto "Morgan Antiques" showed dimly in weather-beaten gold. Inside, the shop ran in a long parallelogram from street to street, a series of tables breaking it like shelves. Pikes hung along the walls, short swords, Burmese krisses, plates of porcelain. The tables were littered with vases, bells, candlesticks, lamps, incense burners—a thousand and one intricacies of bronze and iron. Along the walls Chinese and Japanese, Indian and Tibetan idols crouched, sat or stood erect—gods of ill luck, gods of good luck, gods of diffidence. A pair of well-toned arc lamps lighted the whole omnigenerous jumble. In the rear of the store a coloured porter went about discreetly with a duster. A corpulent Chinaman in Occidental clothes unpacked a great case, and the salesman, a natty, smartly dressed youth with a quiet tread, moved carefully through the array of gods on the walls.

Van Brunt liked the senile street his shop was in. He could not imagine himself on Fifth Avenue or on Broadway. Either had a sense of levity, or artificiality, that would not associate with the business. Fulton Street was mature. It had the colouring

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of a meerschaum pipe. Not that it was quiet. A trolley line clanged and bumped past. An Elevated train crashed high overhead. Past his door people moved in swarms—steady, calm business men; residents on their way to the Heights; the motley, floating population of the docks—Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, South Americans, Greeks, Lascars, burly Scandinavians, lean Scotsmen. Fifteen nationalities passed by in as many minutes. Van Brunt liked that.

The lady in tweeds turned to him:

“You are leaving for Africa, you said. When?”

“I am leaving on Saturday.”

“And I on Monday, Jan. For three years.”

The antiquary regarded solemnly a samurai sword on the wall.

“I thought this was to have been your last hunting trip, Rita.”

“It was, Jan,” she answered slowly. “But there’s nothing for me to do in New York, and there’s a snow leopard or two somewhere in Tibet looking for a hunter. I guess this will have to be my last. When I return I shall be old, Jan. Forty. Think of it!”

Old? She looked as if she could never grow old. Tanned, firm-fleshed, deep-bosomed, lissom as a tiger-cub, straight as a bulrush, she suggested tempered steel. Wind and rain and sun had beaten her face without coarsening it. They had matured it to a fine, mellow strength that one felt rather than saw.

When one first saw Rita Allen one had the impression of a good-looking, capable, rather shy and

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appreciative woman of thirty, who most probably lived in the country and played golf. One wondered why she was still "miss." Brown hair flowed back from her brow like a liquid. Her forehead showed beneath her hat in a segment of delicate tan. One noticed her "American mouth," rather large, rather full, with two rows of amazingly white and perfect teeth; the delicate nose with the sensitive nostrils; her chin, rounding off a fine sweep; her hands, firm, plump, well-shaped, well-kept; her high-arched foot, that even her heavy tan sport shoes could not conceal.

One wondered why some man had not the sense enough to recognise a fine woman when he saw one, and to put a wedding ring on the third finger of her left hand. One looked into her round, brown eye, that seemed to throw beams of light, like lamps, and one thought to one's self that perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea if—this woman were heart-free . . . one felt a shock in the chest.

And then some officious friend informed you that the little lady with the nice brown eyes was Rita Allen, the big game huntress, and you realized difficulty, incredulously, that the smiling orbs had squinted through the fly-sight of an elephant gun and marked the mortal spot behind the left shoulder. You remembered Sunday stories, magazine articles, photographs, movies. You saw the brown-eyed lady dropping on a breeched knee and zipping forty-fives into a hurtling leopard. You still maintained silently that she was a fine woman—you probably said "damned"—but the dream of holy matrimony

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and the pergolaed home in Westchester faded from your sight like a Liberian mirage. You understood perfectly now.

There was nothing theatrical, nothing notoriety seeking, about Rita Allen. Newspapers never chaffed her as she left for or returned from outlandish parts. Nobody expressed any wonder when ten years before, shipbroker Allen, having headed his course for the old breakers of the Milky Way, his shy, athletic daughter had taken it into her brown head to desert the gloomy house on Thirty-seventh Street for the rolling veldts of Africa, and the tangled Bornese forests, and the crags of Baluchistan. Nobody was surprised when she returned a success. Elijah Allen's daughter could not help succeeding.

There was nothing amateurish about her work. She tackled what men did, and tackled it well. Well enough, at any rate, to call forth the praise of Bonavita, and of Wolff, Hagenbeck's man, and of John, Earl of Louth. Well enough to make Patrick Burgoyne, who loathed women as he loathed wart hogs, dub her "the gamest five-feet-three in the world."

She had met Van Brunt in a Hongkong hotel seven years before. She was returning from Sumatra; he from Kiang country, with a cargo of precious jade. A treacherous Afghan valet had seized the occasion when Van Brunt was asleep to insert a knife in his ribs and to light out for Sydney. Between a washed-out little Sister of Charity and herself, Rita Allen had brought him around. It didn't take very long but it was exciting while it lasted. It

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required more than a knife in his back to kill Van Brunt. His thanks, his apologies, his confusion were pitiful. He never forgot that she had spent five weeks dragging him back to life. It ranked in his mind as an Eighth Wonder, transcending the Babylonish gardens and the giant of Rhodes.

And as they stood there together, looking out into the steady roll of Fulton Street, they were both thinking of the same thing—of the first time after the attack when he had been helped from the lift to the balcony of the hotel. A wonderful Chinese night; the moon overhead, white, hollowed out; a nervous pattern of bleached light on the harbour; a disarray of ships, tramps, schooners, full-rigged merchantmen from Hull and Vancouver, sampans, dhows; broad, brilliantly lighted streets, with dark, purple shadows; white-coated policemen; jinrikshas; in the hotel across the way a Highland regiment messing; outside, a gaunt piper striding to and fro, “The Barren Rocks of Aden” screaming from drone and chanter—a choking, nostalgic melody . . .

“I suppose I shan’t see you until you come back, Rita.”

“I don’t see how you can, Jan,” she smiled. There was something strained and nervous and hopeless about the smile.

They stood looking at each other, knowing fully that they were making a mess of it. It seemed to them that there was a thunderstorm hanging between them, and that until it should break into one blinding electric crash no fair sky would roll above them. He wanted to tell that she should not go to Tibet,

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that she should remain in New York and marry him, and if there were any wandering to be done they should wander together, because he loved her and he wanted her, and had done so from the day he first saw her through a feverish mist in an alien hotel.

But the words would not come. He couldn't frame them, and she, as helpless as he was, could not make it easy for him. They stood about, as they had done a score of times before, and shuffled and coloured and were uncomfortable. One could face a charging river bull and drop him coolly at twenty yards, and the other could hunt treasures to the uttermost ends of the earth; but a plain human situation that is handled a thousand times a day was too much for them. One loses patience with that kind of people.

II

Ali Faldallah was dead—"Ali, the Neighbour of God"—and Tumil the sheik sat and looked out on Atlantic Avenue with an expression of malevolent disgust. For Tumil the sheik entertained neither affection nor respect for Ali. He regarded him as the most consummate scoundrel, not even Tumil's venerable self excepted, that ever came from the odorous East. If Tumil had had his own way about the matter the "Neighbour" would have plunked off a wharf in the East River that night. But a sanitation-loving city curbed the sheik's economical instincts. They insisted on a funeral, and a funeral

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cost money. And all that Ali possessed in the world were a suit of morning clothes, a fancy vest and a set of tennis flannels. Tumil the sheik's features registered wry pain.

A passing sailor stopped and looked at the sign, "Oriental Goods," above Tumil's store. He glanced for a moment inside, at the frayed, multicoloured tapestries and carpets hung on the walls; at the plain and at jewelled narghilehs; at gold and red and black fans, at vari-hilted scimitars hanging sinuously in corners; at tablecloths worked with chapters of the Qu'ran; at bowls of Eastern money. His upper lip raised. He glanced through the door at Tumil where he sat huddled in the gloom.

"And there's suckers," he said slowly, as if to himself, "who buy this kind of bunk." He shrugged his shoulders and sauntered on.

Tumil felt rage suddenly emanate from his body in an electric exhalation. He wanted to rush into the street and beat at the sailor's laughing face. He wanted to rush out and to curse Christianity, America, the English language, the guild of mariners, the business in deep waters. Ordinarily he would have treated the chaffing of the honest sea folk with tolerant contempt. He sat still and he hugged rage. Was there not this accursed affair of Ali, the Neighbour of God?

Faldallah had come to the sheik a brief nine months before, on the recommendation of a Syrian rug merchant, and Tumil had engaged him as a freelance salesman. His burly stride, his jet-black hair and eyes, his clean-shaven Turkish face, his slow,

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drawling accent, with the hint of foreign pronunciation, his exotic cigarettes, his dapper taste in clothes, his red fez, from which he refused to be parted for an instant, his magnificent bragadaccio, all made Tumil see in him a paying proposition. He had only to talk to a woman for five minutes, he had only to roll his lustrous eyes upward, to sigh for his native desert home, to call on Allah and to say that all Arabs are fatalists. The mention of the store was brought in delicately later. The lady was escorted down. She was assured that these goods were the only things that could possibly be admitted to a refined home; that the crowned heads of Europe used them, that they adorned the walls of Circassian princes. . . .

“You really consider it cheap, Pasha? It is Pasha, isn’t it?”

“‘Said,’ if you don’t mind. It is ridiculously cheap. I’ve seen rugs not half so good in the Duke of Hull’s, which he tells me cost eighty times as much. I suppose the old chap’s got to let them go. This war! This war!”

And the balance at the husband’s bank wavered and fell.

Men did not like the “Neighbour.” Even Tumil, although his sales were many and high, could not bring himself to like him. He tolerated him, as he tolerated a cash register—a good thing for business and undoubtedly the work of satanic hands.

It had all started with Kadjorian of Armenia. The lace merchant had walked into the shop that morning, rubbing his fat palms. Behind him a

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couple of negro porters hovered with a truck. They wiped their brows carefully, and their shoulders sagged from weariness.

"I've got something for you," Kadjorian lisped.
"Something good! Something from Syria."

The porters heaved their truck loudly into the shop. A heavy, oblong box, worn, mellow, with the faint fragrance of cedar. They yo-hoed it from the carriage and let it down with a crash.

"Open," Kadjorian smirked. "Open and see." He stood sideways with his hands outstretched, like a conjurer hatching a rabbit from a hatful of beaten eggs.

Tumil had raised himself to his six feet of frock-coated, gaunt length. He passed a parchment talon over his apostle's features. He pulled back the hasps of the solid iron clamps. He threw open the box with a crash. Inside was an oblong case of bronze, faded, mildewed, embossed, scrolled with tenuous, crescent-shaped Arabic script.

"What is it?" asked Tumil the sheik.
"Something from Syria. Something very good, very valuable," Kadjorian smirked.

"To the lame every footstep is a lion's stride; to the pauper every bauble is a jewel of high price," Tumil quoted evenly. He bent over and examined it further. On each side he could see a complicated lock of tumblers, levers and bearings—automatic Damascan locks, he recognised, the sort of thing that sends master mechanics into lunatic asylums.
"Where did you get it?"

"I got it from Aristide Estapopoulos, the Greek captain, who comes——"

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"I am not interested in Greeks," Tumil spoke with dignity. "Their origins are incredibly low and their ends are justly evil. Open it."

The Armenian merchant met the situation with cunningly disarming candour.

"I can't," he confessed. "I thought you could."

"It doesn't matter. There is nothing inside. Nothing important. The bones of some Armenian thief, or something equally repulsive. It is a box of bronze, very old, very defective. You brought it over from John Street, and your heart is good, if your brains aren't. I will be generous. I will give you two dollars."

"You are a robber and the descendant of seventeen robbers. You will give me a hundred dollars," the Armenian stoutly demanded.

They settled the matter for twenty-five.

Tumil went over every detail of what happened carefully, like a detective hunting for a clue in a mystery. His brows knotted together and the pupils of his eyes narrowed to pinpoints. His cigarette burnt close to his ochre fingertips. Let us see. Kadjorian had just left when Faldallah came in, his cane swishing the air, his cigarette held jauntily, between first and second fingers. He was whistling, bustling, as if about to break into a song and dance. He hung the fez of his profession on the wall with a sigh of relief, chucked a gruff salutation to Tumil, and slid into the back of the store. Tumil brought him back with a grunt.

"Open that box," he directed. "You will find another one inside it. Open the locks of that."

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The covering slid from the wooden casing. Faldallah bent over. He stood up.

"I can't," said he.

Tumil the sheik had been informed privately by the Ottoman Chancellery, on his careful request, that the salesman was very good at opening locks, as he was also very good at playing cards, and at collecting private items about gentlemen and gentle-women, the judicious use of which added considerably to his income. But his masterpiece was locks. As a consequence Tumil kept no safe in the office, and the register contained little more than petty cash.

He regarded Faldallah with a wise, smiling eye.

"Oh, yes, you can," he urged sweetly. "You underrate yourself. Try again."

The "Neighbour" bent over the bronze case again. He became interested and he knelt down. There was a clicking and jarring as he handled the bolts.

"I wonder what's inside," he mused. "Beer bottles, probably. Funny old box." He whistled for a few moments. There was a metallic chink, a whir and a click. "Clever old devil, whoever worked this combination out. That one's free. Now for the other."

He shifted himself to the other end of the box, He lit a cigarette carefully, and dipped down again, tugged, cursed, shoved. Again the whir and click.

I don't know what to call you,
But you're mahty lak'a—

he caroled. He threw back the lid with a clang.

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"What the devil!" Tumil heard him gasp. And then the thing happened.

From where Tumil sat, he could see the man's right shoulder hunch forward, as if his right hand were dipping into the casket. Tumil sensed something happening—a queer flicker of intuition like a spark of wireless to the brain. He crouched forward to watch. Faldallah's action seemed to have been cut off sharp. He knelt rigid, like a setter pointing. He made no sound. That might have lasted for two seconds. Then suddenly, spontaneously, tragically, he fell on his haunches, like an acrobat starting a back somersault. There was a soft plump as he fell. He straightened out gently, like a sleeper stretching. His cigarette rolled across to Tumil's feet in a gentle flurry of smoke. The lid of the bronze case fell to with a reverberant clang that had something in it of the full savage note of trumpets of war. The locks clicked to like guns snapping.

That was all. The rest was like a vague, blurred vision. The entrance of a customer, who ran out screaming; the entrance of a blue-coated, solemn policeman; the entrance of the coroner's deputy, a man with a sullen fighting face and a moustache like a banner, snappily efficient, callous, hurried; a rapid examination. "Heart disease." They went away.

But Tumil knew better. He laughed shortly, unpleasantly, at the diagnosis. But he said nothing. It was better to have nothing in the papers about the shop. It was wiser to let everything pass. But he was going to be out good money by it, and he wanted to sift the thing to the bottom. Faldallah was going

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to cost him more dead in Brooklyn than he would have brought him when alive in the slave markets of Sego or Harrar. He had sent out Ibrahim ibn-Yussuf, his nephew and second salesman, while he thought the whole train of mystery over. He could solve nothing.

Fatalism is a powerful remedy for spleen—as powerful as philosophy is for a toothache. It is beautifully effective as an Eastern pose, but Tumil was down to hard facts now, and he kicked. He kicked very viciously and sustainedly. Why should this thing happen to him, he demanded? Why couldn't it fall on someone else's hearthstone? Why shouldn't it happen to Kadjorian, that swine and eater of swine, that putrescent offal, suckled in sin and destined for hell fire? Why shouldn't it happen to Van Brunt? eh, tell him that! Why shouldn't it happen to Van Brunt?

The soul of Tumil was surging within him. His rage took another direction, forking like lightning. He thought of the wrongs that had been done him by the trove hunter. He remembered how he had been on the point of selling a rug to MacAlarney, the Spokane timber man, for eighteen thousand dollars.

"It is the life work of the Ouled Wogas," Tumil had said, "the people who live in the crags, who walk with the Abyssinian lions and who throttle the leopard in his lair. Ee—yah, that it should go for so little!"

"Ee—yah," Ibrahim ibn-Yussuf had chimed in. "Uncle, O brother of my father, art thou then so poor that thou must sell it?"

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And then that Irish lout that MacAlarney had with him must recommend that Van Brunt's opinion be asked, when the red-faced fool had his cheque book out. And Van Brunt had pronounced it to be a very fair Jaffa rug, worth all of one hundred dollars.

There had also been Machado do Rio, that Brazilian Crœsus whose coffee and rubber plantations covered whole states. For him had been brought out a long iron box. The box had been opened. Cloths had been unrolled. A sword was produced, brilliant, crescent-shaped, gold-inlaid, scrolled with a chapter of the Qu'ran.

Tumil had bowed his head in prayer.

"It is the sword of Mustafa Khan el-Arabi (on whom be peace!)," he said feelingly, "the companion of Hafiz, the nightingale of Three Thousand and Three Gardens. One thousand five hundred dollars. Oh, Allah! Thy war! How bloody! How distressing to thy people!"

The Brazilian laid down the blade. He stepped out of the shop. He returned with Van Brunt.

"It really is a nice piece of work," he nodded. "I know the man in Trebizond who does those. Ask him if he'll take forty dollars."

And there had been scenes. And words. Words that bit and could not be answered.

Two incidents, those, only two. There had been a dozen. There had been threats of the police. What right had Van Brunt to do these things? What matter of his was it? In Damascus, in Trebizond, in Stamboul, the affair would have terminated

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quickly. A few staggering steps toward him, a quick muscular, upward heave of the right hand, a Kukri blade beneath the left shoulder, a scurry in an alley or a private court. A shrug of the shoulders. Why didn't the fool stay at home?

But in this accursed country, Tumil snarled, expressly created for enemies of the true believers, a man could not go about his private and intimate affairs without interference from red-faced men with little tin signs on their coats——

Tumil's eyes roamed about the shop, bloodshot, stabbing. They rested suddenly on the battered box which Kadjorian had brought, and into which Faldallah had dipped for something and had grasped Death. He would have to get rid of it. How?

And then suddenly, like dawn breaking in a cloudy sky, a smile crept to his features, a shifty, a yellow smile. It drew his eyes out into vindictive lozenges. It turned the corners of his mouth into sinister arabesques. It illumined his face with the faint, unhealthy light of a corposanct. It was the smile of Louis the Eleventh; the smile of Niccolo the Florentine.

III

The coffee house of Hassan the Damascene is not a sightly place. The window is dirty. A few discoloured red scrawls on the glass describe it to the Oriental in bastard Arabic. A soggy yellow curtain conceals the inside. Within there are several tiers of marble-topped tables at which the customer can

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consume paklava and bourma, luscious confections of honey, flour and grease, and can sip coffee, three-quarters grounds, from little lugless cups. Inside, is a motley collection of Arabs, Armenians, Syrians and Turks—rug sellers, curio dealers, fruit merchants, lace peddlers. There are a few sickly gas jets on the ceiling.

Outside, Atlantic Avenue carries on its immense breadth great rivers of people, carts and horses to the ferry. Children tumble over each other on the side walks, jabbering in a dozen strange tongues—Arabic, Syrian, Spanish, Russian. In the distance Court Street shows its orderly serenity, like a strange country, and a moving-picture house flings high and gaudily the banner of civilization and scientific progress.

Ibrahim ibn-Yussuf was enjoying the brief hour's leave which his uncle the sheik had given him. Ibrahim ibn-Yussuf was a tall, thin young man, with dark, regular Turkish features, a thin, silky moustache, and the pallor of a blanched wall. The Son of Joseph was a poet and a gentleman, and a story teller of note, wherefore his reception in the coffee house of Hassan the Damascene was ready and cordial. Ibrahim liked to indulge his talents. It was incense to his nostrils to see the audience hanging on his mellow phrases. He wiped some scraps of bourma adhering to his moustache, took a dainty sip of coffee, lit a cigarette proffered him, bent forward, and began.

“I shall now, O sheik and sons of sheiks, communicate to you the ingenious and witty recital of the

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Porter and the Three Ladies of Bagdad, having due regard to grammar, construction and the rhythm of words. 'The tree beareth fruit,' says the Sufi, 'and the story teller beareth a tale.' I shall begin, O patrons of kings, as thus:

"There was dwelt in Bagdad, O dearest hearts, a porter, a man of excellent proportions and a bachelor withal. Mark now. On a night of Ramadan——"

Hassan the Damascene walked forward with a look of apology on his fat, foolish face.

"Ibrahim ibn-Yussuf, your uncle wants you. At once."

"Oh, dam!" said Ibrahim ibn-Yussuf. He rose and reached for his hat. He stood up and turned to his audience. "On another day, brothers, I will narrate to you the beautiful and touching tale of Ganim bin-Ayyub, the Slave of Love; of Aladdin, who possessed the Lamp of Many Accomplishments; the sprightly dialogue of the Cock and the Bull, and divers other tear-inducing and mirth-compelling stories"—he caught his stick in the crook of his arm—"but for the present may your affairs prosper and your days be happy, and the sun of Allah continue to warm the bald circles on your unsightly heads."

Ibrahim ibn-Yussuf was relieved to see that the frown had passed from the face of Tumil the sheik. He was surprised to find that a smile replaced it. He had seen that smile several times before, but he had never seen it so deep, so quirky, so self-appreciative. He glanced carelessly about the shop. The Syrian box stood on a porter's truck. A pair

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of negroes, who suggested in the dim Oriental gloom of the store a brace of Nubian slaves, stood ready to trundle it fore-and-aft. Ibrahim's nostrils quivered. He scented mystery.

"You will take this box to the Frank Van Brunt," Tumil purred.

"To Van Brunt," Ibrahim smirked. The matter attracted him.

"You will sell it to him."

"I will sell it to him," Ibrahim nearly laughed. The thing was delicious. "And?"

"That is all!" said Tumil the sheik.

IV

They still stood together, Van Brunt and Rita Allen, chatting uneasily, restrainedly. They had talked of her route to Tibet, of the journey to Liverpool with the chance of a "tin fish" striking the vessel amidships, of the trip to Marseilles, of the sweltering Red Sea, of the intensely blue, intensely glassy Indian Ocean, of the wild scramble up and the wild scramble down the Himalayas. There was something pathetic on both their faces. On his it was a look that showed something was wrong and that he was groping for a way to fix it. Her back turned to him for a moment as they threaded their way down the aisle toward the door, and in that brief interval his eyes seemed to stab into the back of her head in one intense, appealing, nearly hysterical glance—something wonderfully big and mute. In

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her eyes was the fighting, set glance of the sportsman, for whom the game has gone badly.

"I'll bring that shotgun up to-night, Rita. You'll like it," he said.

"We'll look for you at dinner-time. You won't forget?"

He shook his head in a puzzled way. As if he could. He sighed. It showed the way she regarded him, he thought to himself. The chance of his forgetting! He would break an appointment with Death to go.

The graduated gong at the door belled musically. There was some grunting, a sharply uttered word of warning, a rumble, and a truck, two porters and a young man came in.

"Just a moment, Rita, if you don't mind," Van Brunt said.

The young man came forward, his white teeth appeared in a grin of pleasure, his eyes beamed, his lean, brown right hand went out.

"Van Brunt Effendi," he warbled. "How pleasant to see you!"

The antiquary regarded him with a cold, unwelcoming eye.

"How do you do, Ibrahim? What can I do for you?"

The beam in the poet's eyes grew more radiant.

"Not what can you do for me, Effendi, but what we can at last do for you. At last we have something worthy to draw your attention to. My uncle takes this occasion to show you how warm and cordial his feelings toward you are——"

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"Exactly," Van Brunt commented grimly.

Ibrahim ibn-Yussuf looked him painedly in the eye.

"No, no," he murmured, "you misjudge the dear old man. But anyhow"—he led the way to the box—"we have here a specimen of the best bronze-work we have ever seen. Our facilities for marketing it are small. People don't want that sort of thing, at least our people—they want swords and rugs and pipes. So we are turning it over to you."

"What is it?" Van Brunt asked shortly.

"It is something from Syria," said Ibrahim ibn-Yussuf. He threw open the lid of the wooden covering. The bronze box lay faintly lustrous before them. Van Brunt ran his fingers over it.

"Come here, Rita," he said.

She walked over. Van Brunt began deciphering the Arabic scrollwork. "Queer, isn't it?" he said. He turned to Ibrahim.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I don't know." Ibrahim spread his hands out, shrugged his shoulders and smiled with taking candour. "Something from Syria."

Van Brunt bent over it again.

"Some religious significance," he muttered. "Here on this side: 'Noah, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed.' Here in the middle: 'And Moses (peace be on him) led his hosting into——' a short sketch of the Israelites' wanderings. And on this side of the lid: 'There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the prophet of God!' Funny! Oh, those freak locks! How do you open it?"

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"I don't know," Ibrahim confessed.

"It will take me half a day to get it open without spoiling it." He made an attempt to lift it with one hand. "What's inside?"

"I don't know," Ibrahim's palms went outward.

"I can tell you this, Ibrahim," Van Brunt's mouth twisted cynically, "if you didn't know there was nothing of value in it, or if you had the faintest suspicion that there was anything worth while in it, you wouldn't have let it out of the shop until it had been blasted with dynamite. How much do you want?"

The poet looked at five exquisitely manicured fingernails.

"One thousand dollars," he said primly.

The antiquary laughed. He produced a pocket-book.

"Ibrahim ibn-Yussuf," he said. "Here is seventy-five dollars. There is your box. Don't say another word. Don't try to haggle. Take either out of the shop."

The poet smiled. He pocketed the bills gently. He smiled a reproachful smile. He held out a lean hand.

"I don't think I shall see you again," he said. "So, good-bye. . . ."

"Going away?"

Ibrahim shrugged his shoulders and smiled again. It might have meant assent; it might have meant doubt; it might have meant anything. He left the store blithely.

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The lady in tweeds looked at the bronze box again. She shivered slightly, as if a draught had struck her. The antiquary walked beside her to the door.

"When are you going to open it?" she asked.

"Some time to-morrow," Van Brunt answered. "Queer old thing, isn't it?"

"I don't know that I like it," she said. "I got a queer feeling when I stood near it."

"What sort of feeling?" Van Brunt laughed.

"Yes, I know, it's foolish. I was afraid, I think. I can't describe it. Half awe, half terror—the feeling you have when you are alone in a vast cathedral. . . ."

v

Li Ki-yu, the corpulent Chinaman who attended to the Chinese department for Van Brunt, was not a Chinaman at all, but a Mongol Tatar. He came of the Du-Nyads—those unhappy, fate-driven nomads who talk to dead friends in the desert and who react like violin strings to every change in the atmosphere.

Van Brunt moved forward toward the cedar chest. He threw the lid open and hefted one side of the bronze box.

"I'm going to move this, Li," he called. "Come and give me a hand."

The Tatar walked toward it majestically. He put forth both hands. He rose again with a queer, distant look in his eyes.

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"Come, Li," Van Brunt encouraged. "Together! Hip-a-hi!"

The Tatar stood like a great pillar. His face became a cast of brown metal. His eyes closed to crescents of white.

"O Van Brunt," he said. "I am afraid. I see things. I hear things."

"What do you see?" The antiquary stood up and was looking at him. "What do you hear?"

"O Van Brunt," he whispered. "It is dark, and cool, and the earth is a little star."

His hands clenched. His head went back until his great throat showed like a column.

"I am away, O Van Brunt. I don't know where I am. The moon is a white pinpoint, and the sun is a gold coin. Clouds rise like mountains, and there are vast spaces and clefts. Lightning flows like the sea. Stars sing. The dead are alive around me."

His voice sank until it became a faint, windlike murmur.

"Somewhere a giant loom is purring," he breathed.

His eyes opened. Colour came back to his cheeks like a tide flowing. He quivered as if the life returning to him were an electric current.

"I will not touch, O Van Brunt," he said slowly. "O Van Brunt, I cannot touch it."

And he swung back to the dark rear of the store, slowly, heavily, majestically, as he had come.

The antiquary let the lid of the chest fall to with a crash. He reached for his hat and stick.

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"I don't know what the devil is wrong with everybody," he muttered savagely. He stopped short in his stride. A sort of fear, like the aftermath of danger, shivered through him. "I don't know what the devil is wrong with myself." He glanced at the chest and his teeth came together with a click. "But I'll open that chest to-morrow if I have to blast it with dynamite."

(2)

THE CHAPTER OF THE TIMID COPY READER

I

HE glanced about the crowded, clicking city room frowningly, as if he were looking for a reporter on whom he might ease his irritation. He turned to typewritten sheets in front of him again, and with a deft flick of soft black pencil he erased the phrase "marital infelicities" and wrote above it the words "domestic difficulties." Farther down the page he crossed out "Father Kellogg" and substituted the "Reverend John A. Kellogg." Across the top of the story he wrote the headlines in fine bold characters:

PLEADS IRRELIGION AS CAUSE FOR DIVORCE

MRS. VLADIMIR NIJINSKI SAYS HUSBAND CALLED CLERGYMEN WORLD'S WORST GRAFTERS

He folded the sheets of the copy in two and flicked it to the man at the pneumatic shute.

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"In another age," he remarked mellowly to the assistant city editor, "and under another government, Vladimir Nijinski would have been hung for a vile atheistical dog."

If anyone having business to do with the head copy reader of the "Brooklyn Guardian" had gone to Jean Master's desk and found him in his usual position he would have seen nothing but a pair of shoulders in a brown tweed coat, and a bald head, a head whose baldness took the form of a Greek lyre, a trained baldness, the baldness of a cleric. When Master raised his head and looked at him with his cold appraising, Who-the-devil-are-you? grey eyes, with his prim mouth that disapproved, with his quivering, uplifted nostrils that hinted at unnameable odours, his interviewer, if he didn't know Master, would be inflamed to murder on the spot.

But in the main the office force of the "Guardian" liked him—the cub reporter, and the managing editor, and the long, red-haired office boy of forty. They granted that he had the most insolent manner of any man alive or dead; they granted that he looked like the curate of musical comedy; they granted his wrist watch and his monocle and his crested cigarettes. They even apologized to you for it.

But they made you grant in return, which you sooner or later did, that Master had a brain that cut like a surgeon's knife; that Master could get more out of a man in five minutes than a third-degree expert at Headquarters could in five months; that Master had the entrée of every embassy in Europe and of every house on Madison Avenue; that Master

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packed more information on out-of-the-way subjects than any other man alive, on such things as demonology, as Eastern religions, as Assyrian archæology.

"Oh, him," adjudged Considine, the office boy, who could recognize a book agent when dressed like a bishop, or a bishop in the blue and brass of a policeman, "oh, him! He's all right."

Master was not always head copy reader. Until the war had burst in Europe, like a great bomb, Master had been Paris correspondent of the paper with plenipotentiary powers for Europe. He had interviewed everyone of newspaper importance from the Emperor of Austria to the "King of the Apaches," from the Pope to Premier Combes. The Shah of Persia on his visit to Europe had been much impressed with the correspondent's manner and his information. He wanted to bring him back to Ispahan. Two things about Master, he confessed, had astounded him: his manner of wearing a monocle and his knowledge of Parsee ritual.

When the river of Teutonic soldiery had begun to trickle into the land that was Belgium, José, the fat managing editor, had cabled him to "get on the job." Ten hours later a Western Union boy laid his answer on José's desk.

"If you consider that for several months I am going to gad after an army in the exercise of its functions; ill-fed, ill-housed, possibly arrested, not inconceivably shot; then you are, my dear sir, mistaken. I suggest that you find an educated prize fighter who is a good shot, hire him, and send him here. As for me, I am coming home." And home

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he came. They twitted him cruelly on his return. They hinted he was afraid.

"Of course I was afraid," he answered blandly.

But Master was too valuable a man to let go. They gave him a sort of roving commission to do what he liked. If anything struck him as being worth while writing he wrote it. When he had nothing else to do, he sat at the head of the copy desk, reading manuscript, verifying names, writing headlines. The thing amused him, he said. It required more brains than poker, and more quickness than polo, and it polished up his spelling.

"Oh, Lord, yes!" he would say, "some day the universities will wake up, and they'll hire copy readers instead of professors; and then, gentlemen, the students will receive some knowledge for the fees they pay."

There was some excuse for Master's bland and sarcastic manner, his natty clothes, his air of conscious superiority. His papers as a member of a First Family of Virginia were authentic and in order; his record at Harvard flashed out like a magnesium candle; in America and in Europe his career as a newspaperman was irreproachable. He was a man with a sense of responsibility, with a sense of public duty, without a trace of huckster's blood in his whole make-up. Statesmen could confide secrets to him, knowing that no desire for a "beat" would make him break his pledged word. Police asked the help of his deductive mind in ferreting out mysteries. And duchesses invited him to tea. And everyone was satisfied with him.

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He reached out his hand for another piece of manuscript, with the air of a child experimenting with another piece of pastry. Considine, lank, red-haired, morose, pushed a card in front of him.

"It's a lady," Considine explained.

"Not a dame, a woman or a chicken," the copy reader elaborated. He glanced at the card. "Oh, Lord!" he drawled in his high-pitched, mellow, lazy voice; "it's this woman, Rita Allen, again. Show her in, Considine."

From which it might be inferred that Jean Master knew Rita Allen very slightly, that she annoyed him, that she was bothering him. This was not the fact. He had known her for thirty years; he had known her father and her mother; he admired her as much as a man can admire a woman; he was fond of her; had anyone asked him if he were ever in love with anyone, he would have fitted a crested cigarette in an amber holder of terrifying length, and hazarded that spasmodically he was in that state with Rita Allen, comfortably though, not enough to compel him to the terrifying adventure of matrimony. The bored drawl, the assumption of lazy annoyance—that was only Master's manner.

She came through the great glass door, and walked toward him, past the platoon of clattering reporters, past the jarring rattle of the telegraph instruments, past the scurrying copy boys, and the harassed editors. Her fine, bronzed face shone out cheerfully like the petals of some dainty brown flower opening at dawn; her open shoulders swaying rhythmically; there was something trim and taut about her, like

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a clipper yacht before the wind. And as she entered the hot, tobacco-laden room she carried an atmosphere with her, something fresh, something open, the sting of an Easter breeze.

"How are you, Jeanie?" she hailed in her low, vibrating tones.

"I am all right, honey, how are you? Don't sit down, there's a good girl. I am going to take you out and buy you a lunch—in good time. I have a little business to attend to first. You may come along."

They made their way toward the elevators. The city room looked up with a smile as they went past. There was something calm, superior, magnificent about Master's slow stride. He might have been an emperor passing appraisingly through the streets of his favourite city.

"You are not to be married or given in marriage yet. Are you, Rita?"

"Not yet, old Jeanie." She looked up at him with a bright, pathetic, brave little smile.

"You may have me any time you like, honey," he drawled.

"But I don't want you, Jeanie."

"I know. You want your Dutch friend. Hasn't he asked you yet?"

"He hasn't," she replied smilingly. "And I don't know how to make him."

"Ask him, my dear, ask him." The copy reader waited to light a cigarette. "Tell him you desire his hand in holy matrimony——"

They stepped into the street. Master adjusted

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his monocle. He leaned languidly on his stick. He surveyed the passers-by with the disgust of a feudal baron.

"Before we eat this lunch I promised you, Rita, we are going to solve a mystery. Did you ever hear of a Turk who died of heart disease?"

"I don't think I did."

"Neither did I. They don't do it."

"What do they die of?"

"Of lightnings and tempests; of plague, pestilence and famine," he replied; "of battle and murder, of sudden death; of sedition and privy conspiracy. But—"

"Yes?"

He turned about and looked at her pityingly.

"But to be a Turk," he continued, "and to die of heart disease! It isn't done, honey, it isn't done."

II

Turbulence had left the heart of Tumil the sheik, and calm reigned in it, as a sky of blue succeeds the burst of a thunderstorm. Passivity and submission, the cardinal virtues of the Eastern, were now his, as after a gust of passion, charity and forgiveness flower in the bosom of the Occidental. He had been wronged but he was at peace with all men. Who was he, Tumil, to cry out against the inexorable development of Fate? And besides, if Fate could only play the same nasty trick on Jan Van Brunt that it had played on him, he would give Fate a

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quitclaim for the full amount he had been mulcted. Even though, for the interment of Ali Faldallah, the Neighbour of God, one hundred ringing dollars must pass into the hands of an unbelieving and ununderstanding and unsympathetic race.

True, the profits that had accrued to him from Faldallah's work had been a hundred times in excess of the assistant's last expense. But that was beside the question. He put it all out of his mind quickly. A little raising of prices all around would quickly even up. That morning he had engaged a new assistant who had first seen the yellow sunlight in a Hungarian ghetto, but with a haircut and a general make-up, he would soon be transformed to a Moslem Albanian, whose patriotic and pathetic outbursts, and whose tales of peril in the imminent deadly breach, would charm as many gentle hearts as had Faldallah's tale of his exile from his father's nomad tents, and of his parting from his milk-white Arab steed. He had a nice eye for the romantic, had old Tumil!

He settled himself back comfortably in his arm-chair again and took up his eternal watch on Atlantic Avenue. The machine of Life had balked and back-fired for an instant, but it was running freely again as if nothing had happened, its belts humming, its bearings purring. A little ray of sunlight stabbed into the shop and bathed him in warm glory.

The door opened easily and a man and a woman entered the store laughing. Tumil rose to receive them. He took in the woman with a shrewd appreciative glance from the trim shoes to the gay scarf on

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her Panama. He liked the confident, merry way of her. The man he did not care for. The bored air, the blind look of the monocle, the raised eyebrows and the raised nostrils irritated Tumil. He had seen him once before. The man with the monocle had fussed about the shop a month ago, and bought a small Copt cross at a perfectly honest figure. He remembered how he was maddened to the point of murder by the man's easy, familiar contempt. Suddenly they were standing before him.

"My name is Master, Jean Master," he was saying. "Rita, may I present to you a Mr. Tumil. It doesn't sound right, but it is perfectly true. He should be called Abou Ben Adhem, shouldn't he? Looks the part too. Oh, yes you do."

He straightened himself up lazily. His voice drawled.

"I called about Ali Faldallah," he explained. The sheik's voice rasped.

"Ali Faldallah is dead," he answered shortly.

"I know," the copy reader nodded deprecatingly. "He died yesterday morning. What did he die of?"

"Heart disease." Tumil spoke like a snarl.

"So I have heard." He took out a green silk handkerchief and began polishing the monocle. He replaced it with a frown. "So I have heard. Let's get down to brass tacks, you and I, Abou. What did he really die of?"

The antique dealer took a quick step forward. Rage blazed in his eyes. The copy reader fished something from his pocket.

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"Take your time and read it carefully, Abou," he advised.

It was a square piece of pasteboard, small, red, with the coat of arms of New York City in one corner, and "Police Card" stretching across it in slanting capitals. A raised stamp corrugated it unbeautifully, and at the bottom a hasty signature sprawled. In effect it said that Jean Master was to be passed through police and fire lines as a duly accredited representative of an evening newspaper. But if Tumil the sheik possessed knowledge of the world and of men commensurate with his years, which were many, his knowledge of the written English word was painfully limited. The only thing plain to him was "Police." The official look of the pass impressed him. He wilted visibly. The copy reader took him to the front of the store and pointed to the street.

"That husky and handsome gentleman, Abou, honey," he said in his mellow voice, "in the brass buttons and the blue coat, is a very worthy Irishman, by name O'Flannery and by profession a policeman or 'cop.' It would afford him a ghastly and degenerate pleasure to escort you to a prison cell—and I should hate to see him do it, Abou."

He drew himself up to his full height and his tones became crisp.

"What did Ali Faldallah die of?"

"I don't know."

"What do you think he died of?"

The sheik's hands spread out like a fan.

"*Inshallah!*"

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“Can that ‘*Inshallah*’ stuff, old dear, and talk the President’s American. Of course it was the will of Allah, but there were divers concomitant causes, or, to put it more plainly, something else helped. What was he doing at the time?”

“He was opening a box.”

“He was opening a box. A quiet and prosaic act. And what was in the box, might I ask?”

Tumil looked at him suspiciously. Master twiddled the card between his fingers. He whistled a bar or two carelessly. He glanced out of the window toward the blue-coated giant swinging his night-stick jauntily in the sunlight.

“There was another box,” Tumil continued haltingly. “A metal box. He opened that slightly, and then he fell back.”

“Where is the box now?”

“It is sold. The box had nothing to do with it.”

“Hm!” Master pursed his lips up. “We’ll see about that later. He died of heart disease, they say. Did you notice anything queer about him. Any tinge of blue about the lips? Anything?”

“Nothing. He looked as if he were asleep.”

“But he was dead?”

“He was dead.”

The copy reader shuffled about nervously a moment. He screwed his monocle into his eye. He suddenly hung his stick on the crook of his arm, and faced about.

“I am going to use your telephone for a moment, Abou, honey. You don’t mind, do you? Of course you don’t. I’ll give you a nice new buffalo nickel

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for it—some day. Just excuse me a moment, Rita."

To Rita Allen there was something keenly enjoyable about the duel between the flippant newspaper man and the wily old sheik. She liked the way, under Master's guard of banter, his grey eye stabbed like a Florentine sword. She watched for a moment Tumil as he looked after the copy reader, his small black eye distilling rage. She watched his knuckles quiver while his face kept still, and she wondered to herself what he had to conceal. In the back of the shop she could hear the voice of Master speaking into the telephone:

"The coroner's office? . . . Is that Doctor Worthman speaking? . . . This is Jean Master. . . . Very well, thank you. . . . I wanted some information about Ali Faldallah, who died of heart disease yesterday at his place of business on Atlantic Avenue. . . . Doctor Brady saw him? . . . Will you kindly ask Doctor Brady to step down to Faldallah's place at once? . . . It is very important indeed. . . . Thank you, good-bye."

He strolled back to her with maddening ease, lighting a cigarette as he came. He passed Tumil without a word.

"We are a step nearer now," he said. "It's not boring you, is it? Of course it isn't. You'll just have to content yourself in patience, Rita, honey, or you eat alone and pay for your meal."

He traced a few arabesques on the floor with the point of his stick.

"It's queer about that box," he said.

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“That reminds me,” she said. “Don’t laugh, please. Haman Bey was telling me in Cairo a queer story of a box like that. It killed everybody that looked inside it. He couldn’t say what it was like, but it was looted about fifty years ago from the Senussyeh monastery in Harrar. It was brought into Uganda, and when it had passed into the hands of old King Loda, and had killed three of his medicine men, it was passed on to the Somali. God knows how many people it killed there! The Mahdi had it for a time. Its last possessors tied it on a canoe and sent it down the Nile. They call it there the ‘Message of the Power of Allah.’ It’s one of those queer legends like that of the dinosaurs in the Congo. But weird things happen in Africa, things that make your heart stop beating. . . .”

“My dear, my dear!” Master’s face was grave. His tones were solemn. “My dear, they happen in America too. In New York the Black Mass is still read and they still chant the Litanies of the Unknown God. Did you ever hear of the Red Curate? Did you never ask any old Catholic priest here about the Chalice of Gall? Laugh! One can’t laugh at those things. One can only pray.”

III

He came into Tumil’s office with that peculiar animal-like trot that doctors develop in the business of life and death. He was a small man, with an inordinately knobby forehead and an inordinately

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long, red moustache. He looked more like a politician than a doctor. And something impressed you that the business of post-mortems was irksome to him, and that he much preferred that of debating in a political club. He was the sort of man who regarded the day's work as a necessary mortal ill, bringing in bread and butter, and not as an end of existence. He had evidently been primed that Master was a man to whom deference should be shown. The copy reader weighed him with half-closed eyes.

"Doctor Brady," he said briskly. "I am very sceptic of your verdict about Ali Faldallah. What made you say that it was heart disease?"

"Of course it was heart disease!" the little doctor flared.

"Now, listen, Doctor Brady." Master's voice was even and persuasive, the voice one uses with a child. "There is no muckraking in this. There is no trouble behind it. Believe me, there is nothing to adopt a combative tone about. You came in here yesterday morning and you found this man lying on the floor."

"Yes."

"You were told that he was opening a very heavy case and that he had fallen where you found him.

"And as most accidents from heart disease occur when the subject is undergoing heavy exertion, and as there was nothing indicative of anything else—of blood clots on the brain or a paralytic stroke—you ascribed it to heart disease. Were there any of the signs that accompany heart disease?"

"Nothing very pronounced;" the little doctor was becoming red in the face. His eyes looked

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scared. He saw newspaper headlines and the cold scorn of an examining magistrate. "Nothing much."

"Listen again, Doctor Brady." Master seemed to be persuading him in some vague way to confess and that there would be no punishment. "I repeat again. I am looking for no sensations, but I intend to get to the bottom of this. There were no marks of heart disease about him at all, were there, now?"

"No," the little doctor blurted. "There were no marks of anything about him."

"Nothing that suggested foul play in any way. No abrasions? No wounds? Nothing on the back or on the palm of the right or left hand? Nothing on the forearm? No little punctures? No pricks?"

"On my solemn word of honour," the coroner's man quavered, "on my oath, if you won't believe that, there was not a mark of any kind on him. I didn't know what to make of it, and I looked for marks. He didn't even die, I tell you. The man simply stopped living and became dead. Do you understand me?"

"I do more," said Master simply. "I believe you."

"I can't understand it myself," the doctor hurried on. He mopped his forehead. "There used to be a verdict that covered that long ago, but they won't accept it nowadays." He laughed scornfully. "That kind of thing used to be called what it is—'the Act of God.'"

"'The Act of God,'" Master muttered to himself. "'The Act of God.'"

The copy reader's face brightened. His smile

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flashed out like sunlight. He took the doctor by the arm and led him to the door.

“‘The Act of God’ would appear ridiculous on a report sheet, you thought, so you wrote down ‘heart disease.’ I sympathize with you, Doctor Brady.” He opened the door. “I don’t think anything of this will ever appear in print, so I wouldn’t let myself worry over it, if I were you. Even if it does, we’ll be able to explain to Doctor Worthman, and I’m a very good hand at explaining. Thank you ever so much for coming down. You’ve helped me immensely. Good-bye, then, doctor, good day!”

And the little doctor found himself suddenly alone on the sidewalk.

The copy reader, his hands in his pockets, his shoulders swaying slightly, a quiet smile rippling about the corners of his mouth, advanced toward Tumil. He had the air of a man with the situation at his fingertips.

“And now,” he remarked, “we come to the mysterious box.”

He flicked the ash off his cigarette with a deft forefinger. His eyes looked at Tumil as though he were sighting along the barrel of a rifle.

“This box, you say, was of bronze. It was closed.”

“It was locked. It was locked with two Damascus locks, one on each side.”

“I know. Those infernal things you can’t open unless you know the combination of knobs to push. Faldallah opened it, however.”

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"He did," Tumil replied grimly. "Ali Faldallah could open any lock."

"I think I understand you. Faldallah was an accomplished man. Now, then, Faldallah put his hand into it, and then, according to the evidence, he fell back dead. Now for a very important point, Abou. What was in the box?"

The sheik repeated his fan-like spreading of hands.

"I don't know," he said simply. "The lid fell to. The locks closed. I couldn't open it again."

"Was there anything peculiar about the box? Nothing in shape? No. Any writing on it?"

The sheik's eyes looked blankly at the copy reader.

"I can't read," he confessed. He dropped his head. "Oh, shame on my grey hairs!"

The copy reader clapped his hands as he would at a theatre. "Bravo!" he cried. "Beautiful!" He chuckled and slapped his thigh.

"It would have fooled even me, Abou," he smiled. "Do you remember, I was in here a month ago? And on that occasion, old dear, you were sitting on a chair, and you were reading a beautiful manuscript of the *Kitab el Anwar*, the Book of Lights, and you were appreciating it immensely. I was greatly taken with you on that occasion, Abou. I am afraid we have got to return and define our first principles again. Listen. Outside is O'Flannery, the Occidental 'cop,' who has a deep distrust of every one whose colour is not that of the driven snow. He is very much of a bigot, Abou, and I should hate to

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drag him into this pleasant company. Now, tell me, what was written on the box?"

The sheik threw his head back.

"On one side was written," he said tauntingly, "'There is no God but God and Mohammed is the Prophet of God!"

"A statement with the second part of which I am not in accord, Abou. And elsewhere, honey?"

"On the other side were the four sacred names—Noah, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed. And in the middle was an account of the wanderings of the children of Israel from Egypt to their Land of Promise."

"The Israelites," Master looked blankly about him. "What had the Israelites to do with it?"

"And on the front panel, from lock to lock," Tumil continued, "there read: 'It came from Jerusalem, and it went to Babylon. The barbarians took it, but it came to Mecca. And in Mecca it rests.'"

The copy reader pivoted about like a flash.

"The Israelites!" he said to himself slowly. "'And it went to Babylon . . . and in Mecca it rests!'"

He took a couple of steps toward the door, haltingly and came face to face with Rita Allen. He looked at her dully, as if he did not recognise her. He had forgotten he had brought her with him. He had forgotten she existed. After the talk with the doctor she had wandered about the store looking at rugs, at scimitars, at mosaics, at odd vari-coloured Byzantine lamps. The mysterious box was becoming a

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little tiresome, she thought. She wished Master would get it over and come along to lunch. She remembered something suddenly, and she went up to him.

"Listen, Jeanie," she said. "Something I remembered just now——"

He looked at her unseeingly.

"'It went to Babylon' . . ." he repeated. His face had resolved itself into a maze of furrows and lines. Rita Allen smiled as she watched his tense expression.

"And Ali Faldallah died when he touched it. . . ."

And as she watched him, a queer, scared look crept into his eyes and he gulped suddenly. It passed out of them quickly and he began to laugh. At first the sound was full and ringing, as if he had discovered himself in some ludicrous mistake; it lost its hearty ring and became mechanical, as if he were puzzled; it became strained and nervous. It ended in a sort of strangling sob.

"O my God!" he breathed. "O my God!"

The game huntress felt a shiver of cold pass over her. Little electric shocks played about her cheeks and forehead. The copy reader seemed to spring forward.

"The box!" he choked. "The box! Where is it now?"

The door of the shop jarred a little, and in spite of her tense, scared interest in Master's question, she looked toward it. A tall young man was coming in—suave, Oriental, with a silky black moustache. He hung a soft felt hat and a stick on a peg and walked about briskly as if he were looking for something.

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He was undoubtedly connected with the store. As Rita Allen looked, she recognised him as the young Turk whom she had seen in Van Brunt's place yesterday. The recognition seemed to strike her brain with a heavy, crashing blow. She looked at him fascinatedly. As she looked the voice of Tumil rose in an apologetic croon.

"I am heart-broken, Effendi," he was saying. "I am grieved to death. Yesterday evening to a Brazilian who would not go without it. It was unlucky and I let it go. He paid well for it. It is now on its way to South America. He sailed this noon. I am sorry."

She wheeled about in one lithe turn. Her face was white beneath the tan, and on its blanched surface her eyes showed in two dabs of brown.

"You are lying!" she blazed. Her words cut like the flash of a whip. "You are lying! You sold that box to Jan Van Brunt!"

IV

Young Haines brought his little grey racing run-about to a crawl with a gasp of incredulous dismay. He had forgotten—seemingly impossible thing!—that the Pride of Sheepshead Bay was to have gone ten rounds last night with the Californian champion at New Orleans. And he had forgotten to look up the result. He was flashing down Court Street on his way to Manhattan when he remembered it. He cast a quick glance around for a newstand. A quarter block down Atlantic Avenue he caught sight of the red bulk

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of one, and with a flirt of the wheel he steered toward it. He brought the car to the pavement in a vibrant purr. He got down lazily and approached the stall.

The sight of a long sinuous blade in an Oriental antique store caught his eye for a moment and he decided subconsciously that he would look at it once he had seen the item he wanted in the newspaper. As he walked forward he thrust his hand in his pocket for change. He felt something strike his left shoulder violently and twist him spinningly around.

“What the blazes!” he swore.

He looked about and his underjaw dropped in a breathless gape. A smart figure in tweeds and a modish hat had flashed across the pavement like a stone from a catapult. She hurled herself into the car and reached for the brake. A man with a monocle in a strained blanched face vaulted after her into the other seat. There was a clatter of levers, a roar, and the car was cutting down the Avenue in a streak of grey.

Haines woke up. Suddenly he tore across the street. Suddenly he clutched a gaping patrolman by the arm.

“They’ve got my car!” he gasped. “They’re stealing my car!”

The patrolman looked at him a moment in stupefaction. He began running forward, shouting madly. The car became a grey blur in the distance. He pulled out something white from his hip pocket as he ran. He dropped on his knee and fired.

But Rita Allen did not heed the shout or the revolver. She heard his warning cry as a tenuous

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burst of sound. Something pinged overhead, like a tennis racket striking a ball sharply. In the distance there was a faint sound, like the lash of a whip. In front of her the avenue stretched, a long acute angle in dun and black. A child ran out in front of them. A woman screamed. She whirled the machine around in a sickening serpentine curve. They turned into a side street on two wheels.

"We'll be in time, I know," Master heard her half sob. "Oh, God! if we aren't!"

Houses ran past them in a blurred line like telegraph posts past an express train. As they volleyed forward it seemed to Master that they were a projectile winging somewhere and that space was opening in order to let them pass. Wind struck their faces like cold water. The cut-out rumbled like thunder. They cut beneath the noses of a team and dray ambling to the river, and left the driver great-eyed with terror. An open main, piled high with dirt, showed suddenly before them. The copy reader rose high in his seat.

"For God's sake, Rita, be careful!" he shouted.

And then with a jar and a thud they were past it and flying onward.

They crashed into Court Street and swung into Fulton. The midday crowd scattered before them like hares before a hunting dog. On all sides curses rose, half screams of terror, snarls of angry protest. Policemen raced forward after them like runners bent to the wind. They sprang forward in a final burst of speed and stopped with a grinding of brakes that set them skidding sideways like a figure in a dance.

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"Here we are!" the driver snapped. "Come!"

As Master sprang to the sidewalk the detail of two men standing and looking upward caught his eye. He heard their voices raucous in argument as he passed.

"It's smoke, I tell you," said one. "There's something afire."

"It ain't smoke," the second laughed contemptuously. "It's steam."

Something prompted Master to look upward as he ran, and suddenly he stopped still, with the peculiar unexpected quality of a man who has been mortally wounded. Above the store of the antiquary a thin thread of vapour mounted upward. It ascended in an unbroken line, like the smoke of a fine cigarette on a summer's evening. It became iridescent as he looked, like a portion of cloud under the sun's shimmer. In some queer way it suggested to Master a thin line of joining between earth and heaven. The voices reached him again.

"I tell you it's some kind of smoke," the first speaker rose petulantly. "When I was passing last night I saw it, and it was fire instead of smoke. Yes, I tell you. Did you ever see those sparks coming out of a wireless place? Like those, only in a line up."

A great dry lump rose in Master's throat, and little black and red spots passed before his eyes. A wind came out of nowhere and bathed him in an icy shower. It seemed to him that his body was a dried husk, and that his soul was a kernel inside it, dry, insufficient. He felt a hand tug at his coat.

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Rita Allen was looking at him with a tense white face.

"Are you coming in?" she asked. And Master heard a great fear in her voice.

"Yes, I'm coming in," he answered. "I'm coming in, in the name of God!"

The door swung to behind them with a jarring crash. They scurried past the tiers of tables; past the negro officeman, who looked at them with round startled eyes; past the gigantic Tatar, who looked at them with filbert-shaped, impassive ones. They wheeled around an immense Pekinese screen, and they stood still.

They saw the bronze box reared on a high table, majestic, it seemed to Master, and to Rita Allen beautiful. They saw Van Brunt on one knee before it, his great shoulders bowed as if in adoration, his head standing out like something Phidias the Greek might have carved, the sun playing in strange threads of gold on his tawny Viking's beard. About him on the floor were braces, bits, chisels, pliers, that faded to insulting insignificance beside the mighty presence and mellow colour of the bronze box. They looked at Van Brunt and a great fear came on them.

He stood up suddenly, and stretched out both hands toward it, as if he were going to raise the lid. Master sprang at him like a leopard. He caught him around the shoulders. He sent him staggering to the edge of the screen. Rita Allen sank on a chair, and suddenly, heart-rendingly, broke into a torrent of sobs.

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The antiquary looked about him. He threw a glance at the window, and through it saw a group of people about an abandoned motor-car, and a burly policeman making his way toward the door. He looked at Rita Allen, took a quick step forward, and stopped. He turned to Master.

"What is it?" he asked. "Tell me. What is it?"

The copy reader pointed to the box. His face was livid. His features twitched convulsively. Moisture spread over his forehead like dew on a whitened wall.

"It's death, man," he gulped. "It's death, I tell you. It's the Holy Death."

(3)

THE CHAPTER OF THE SON OF LEVI

I

THERE is a mysterious reality about a rabbi that other clergymen do not possess, something intangibly powerful, wise, compelling. Beside him the Occidental cleric seems to pursue an intelligible and matter-of-fact profession. The Buddhist monk becomes a mendicant of extreme simplicity, the Hindu fakir a boisterous vaudevillian, the dervish a fanatic acrobat. It is this mystery that appals, attracts, antagonizes. Karevski, the captain of the Black Hundred of Warsaw, was asked indignantly why he had killed a rabbi in a pogrom.

"I don't know," he answered, and he looked puzzled. "He looked so criminally mysterious."

But even Karevski, rabid anti-Semite that he was, would have hesitated before attacking the Rabbi Stephen Bogorza. Imagine a spare pillar of a man, with the ramrod back of a soldier and the face of a great noble, a great hawk's nose and a brown, luminous eye. You saw him passing along Fifth Avenue with slow majesty, and, if it weren't for the black, severe, clerical garments, you might have

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seen in him the old age of a field marshal. You approached nearer so as to drink in the high feudal look on his features, and you gasped in surprise as if a famous jewel had been uncased before you.

There was no high feudal look there. The eyes had no haughtiness. His whole expression was a mixture of kindness and wisdom and experience. The mystery was there—the mystery of a problem solved. O'Gorman, the Catholic Cardinal, half medieval father and half shrewd statesman, had once looked into his eyes and had never forgotten them.

"He reminds me of Saint John," he said. He fell musing, and the quotation came from his lips in an embarrassed murmur: "Little children, love one another."

Master, connoisseur of religions, was sitting at his desk at the *Brooklyn Guardian*, when a photograph of the old rabbi was sent up to accompany a story of the Zionist movement. The head copy reader scanned every feature with his cold man-of-the-world's eyes.

"I'm going to hear this man preach," he resolved.

It was with a feeling of awe that he marched up the steps of the weather-beaten, Oriental-looking synagogue on Fifth Avenue. He had been too long in Europe not to imbibe an element of anti-Semitism, and he was too much of a fool, he told himself, not to feel a little afraid. It was like stepping back two thousand years. He crept through the dimly lighted temple and slid into a seat furtively. He had asked a little Jewish reporter on the *Guardian* about Rabbi

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Bogorza, and he was told that he preached seldom, that he was too old, but that he was going to preach that night.

"You are going to hear the greatest man in the world," said the little reporter; and Master warmed at the hero worship that shone in his face.

He saw the great, kindly features in the half-gloom, somehow luminous as though a halo were about them. He saw the well-shaped nobleman's hand open a little book of gold and green. He heard the rabbi's voice like the tones of an antique violin.

*"For the good are always the merry,
Save by an evil chance—"*

he quoted. A little smile hovered about his eyes.
"A text from an Irish poet."

Master leaned back with a queer expanding sensation about his heart as if tight wrappings were dropping away. He had been right. This man would enter into no dry Talmudic dissertation, but he would translate life as he saw it through those clear eyes of his. There were no religious differences discussed; no propaganda unfolded—nothing but a clean, broad outlook on the world that hacked scales from the newspaperman's cynical eyes. And as he walked heavily down the granite steps that night, Master saw, in distinct black and white, the great story of Judaism. Its mighty captains and adventurers, its passionate women, its prophets and singers. What a religion for a man, he said; what a religion for a poet!

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Among the things that Master was connoisseur of, human nature ranked high. With the diplomacy that had gained for him the friendship of France's president, and the courtesy that had charmed even gaunt old Peter of Montenegro, he set out to meet and to know the rabbi. The old man greeted him with a kindly smile.

"I am always happy to know young men," he said, "for young men are the engine of the world."

A queer friendship sprang up between these two. The old rabbi looked beneath Master's carefully tailored and correctly bored exterior and found a genuine pulsating humanism, and he liked his keen brain and his choice scholarship. And Master tried to plumb the cleric's eyes for that philosophy of life that life was still withholding from himself. There was no question of conversion. Master clung tenaciously to the mixture of Christianity, paganism and science which he called his religion, and the old cleric respected it with the tact and delicacy of one gentleman toward another. They talked of science and of dogma, of books and of fashions, and of the hotch-potch of America. And one evening the rabbi told Master what he had been waiting months to hear—the rabbi's life.

He told of his birth in Toledo, that Spanish city where Jews as royal as the Bourbons have flowered for centuries; of his studies under rabbi Ben Israel of Saragossa; of his young dark-eyed Spanish wife, whom he had hardly known before she died. He told Master how, distraught with misery and living only to die, he had gone through the world preaching

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to the scattered Jewries. He described to the copy reader a geographical romance that made tales of old-time travellers seem drab and grey.

He described his journey through the ghettos of America. He spoke of little peddlers and of great merchants and of money kings in banking citadels with the same paternal kindness. He told Master of the solemn Jews of England; of the merrymakers of France; of the high Hebrew chivalry of Spain. He told him also of less pleasant things—of pogroms in Russia that resembled a devil's sabbath; of fierce, passionate murders in Africa which must be suffered in silence for fear of worse.

He told him of the queer Tatarlike men who flit in gaberdines through the streets of Bokhara, a mark for every Cossack's whip. He told him of the strange Mongol tribes who dwell high up in China, and who still practise a Judaism that time has blurred to a faint shadow. He recounted to him legends of the Forgotten Green Isle of the Libyan desert, where Jews of a thousand years ago have mixed with Arabs, and use black magic, and summon *djinn*.

And then his eyes would light up and his voice boom, as he told of the dream of his life, of how one day Zion would reassemble on the green hills of Palestine, and how no longer would the elders beat their heads against the Temple wall. The mighty edifice of Solomon would rise again in all its glory and majesty. And the Jew would no longer be a huckster and a helot, but a soldier and a trader and a tender of flocks.

“Not in my days or in yours,” he would say, “nor

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in the days of any man who lives now. Not until the black horses and the red horses, and the horses that are white, and dappled and grey, shall quiet His spirit in the ends of the earth."

At times, too, Master would please him by drawing out his knowledge of Jewish genealogy. He would trace his own descent through innumerable and complicated generations to the Levites who marched in the van of the Israelites, the soldier priests who carried the Holy of Holies on slim acacia rods.

And it all produced a vague unrest in Master's heart and mind. He had considered himself a shrewd citizen of the world before he had met this modern prophet of an antique faith. He felt now that he was a babe in arms, he felt his cynicism to be the pulings of a schoolboy, and that life would for ever remain a riddle to him. The old rabbi saw the thought passing through his head. He laid a kindly hand on the newspaperman's shoulder.

"You are thirty-five years old," he said, "and you have fifteen years' experience. I am eighty and I have sixty. When you are as old as I am, my son, you will be as tolerant, and as kindly, and as happy as I."

II

They stood together in Van Brunt's store in a nervous group of three—Rita Allen, Van Brunt and Master. Outside, Fulton Street droned by like a faint spinning wheel. An Elevated train came around the bend in a metallic purr that rose un-

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expectedly to an ear-splitting shriek. Somewhere down the harbour a vessel hooted impatiently. A swarthy Italian swung by, humming a Neapolitan ballad. Master fiddled at his watch.

"Dr. Bogorza will be here any minute now," he said. He hesitated. "I suppose I'd better tell you what you've got in that case."

He glanced around the store with a face that seemed to have paled suddenly. He looked at the giant Tatar salesman as he gazed at an immense Chinese Buddha from a Canton temple that usually had an expression of placid wisdom on its gilded brow, but that now seemed no more than a thing of gold and stone. The antique store had taken on unaccountably the appearance and spirit of a sanctuary. The swords and pikes and armour showed dully like trophies of war. The plates and lamps and great cloisonné jars and jewelled necklaces resembled spoil from a punished country. The gods that had adorned temples in China and Tibet and Turkestan were vassals doing homage to a mighty conqueror. Master hesitated.

"The Ark of the Covenant is there," he said.

He looked at them fearfully, as if the grotesque words should have drawn forth an unbelieving laugh from both of them. Their expressions never changed. It seemed as if the atmosphere about them had permeated their minds so that no statement he could make would astonish them.

"Don't you understand?" he asked. His voice trembled. "The Ark of the Covenant. The trysting place of God with Israel."

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With a quick gesture Rita Allen raised her hand to her bosom. Colour ebbed from her face in little receding throbs. Van Brunt ran his fingers through his great golden beard.

"So that was what killed Faldallah," he said. His voice was low and hesitating.

"That was what killed Faldallah," Master nodded nervously. "Don't you remember how Uzzah, the son of Abinadab, died by the Ark when he put forth his hand to it? And the fifty thousand and three score and ten men of Beth-shemesh who were smitten with slaughter because they had looked into the Ark? None but the Levites could touch it." His voice dropped to a scared whisper. "That was what would have killed you."

There was a gulping sob from Rita Allen. She turned aside.

"What is it, Rita?" The antiquary took a quick step forward.

Her hand pressed her heart closer.

"It's so big," she gasped; "so big that it hurts."

A long silence fell between them. They looked at each other, ashamedly, inquiringly, like people awaiting news of life and death. Van Brunt's voice broke the silence with a sense of shock.

"How did you know?" he asked.

"You remember the inscription on the panels of the bronze box? 'It was in Jerusalem and it went to Babylon, and from Babylon it went among the barbarians. It came to Mecca, and in Mecca it rests.' That and Faldallah's death—that death like falling asleep—gave me the idea." Master spoke

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lightly, like a man trying to bridge over a trying gap. The undercurrent of nervousness that he was suffering crept through his tones like a minor chord.

“You know there was always a mystery as to what became of it. Some of the Rabbinical writers said it was carried off to Egypt, and there is a legend that it is buried on a hillside in Palestine with the prophet Jeremiah guarding it, and that on an appointed day the hill shall burst open and Jeremiah shall walk out carrying it.

“The historians say it was carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar’s mercenaries with the other spoils of the Temple, and that when Babylon was sacked under Sardanapalus the northern tribes discovered it and brought it into Turkestan. You know the Kaaba in Mecca?”

He turned to Van Brunt. Van Brunt nodded.

“The Moslems claim it is in a vault there—that the true believers discovered it and brought it to the Holy City. I’ve got an idea, Rita,” he said, “that some of your African friends got it from the Kaaba when the Mahdi preached the holy war. But Africa soon became afraid of it. You remember telling me of something that had been set on a canoe on the Nile, and that no one heard of it since. It was found and passed on, I think, until the Greek captain brought it from Alexandretta to New York. And then Tumil got it, and then you, Jan.”

He stopped and looked out to the street expectantly.

“And the third thing I knew it by,” he said slowly, “was the Shekinah.”

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“The Shekinah?” Van Brunt queried.

“The glory of the Lord,” Master whispered solemnly. “The slim, thin pillar of vapour that shone outside, and the little trail of fire last night. ‘For the cloud was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night’.”

A little sobbing cry came from Rita Allen’s throat. She stood erect; and, from where Master was, he could see that her face was blanched and that her eyes were dry. The antiquary looked at her with an expression of dismay, of pained wonder, of ununderstanding. The copy reader nodded at her sympathetically.

“I know, honey,” he said. “I know. I feel like that myself.”

They fell silent again. Life, it seemed to all of them, was an eternity of waiting, made up of spurts of conversation, and of silent lulls, like the dots and dashes of a wireless code. Rita Allen turned to Master.

“I wonder what it is like,” she said.

“We shall know what it is like very soon,” he replied.

“The rabbi is going to open it,” Van Brunt said in a queer, strained voice. He seemed to be repeating a fact to himself in which he knew he could never believe.

“He is going to open it,” Master nodded. “He is the only one who can open it—the son of Levi.”

Rita Allen looked from the one to the other with her strained, blanched face and her brown dabs of

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eyes. "What is going to happen?" she murmured.
"Oh, what is going to happen!"

The copy reader regarded her with eyes as fearful as her own. "God knows, honey," he said solemnly. "Only God knows."

Silence fell again, and they stood like three tragic figures of stone. Master noticed, unconsciously, Rita Allen move closer to Van Brunt until her shoulder touched his arm. He saw Van Brunt lean toward her like a mighty protecting force. They waited. Master fidgeted. He drew a cigarette from his case, and then furtively, as if he were afraid of being caught in a blasphemy, pitched it quickly away. They saw men and women pass by the window, and they gazed at them wonderingly, as if they were grotesque, insensate animals milling in an enclosure. The clatter of the streets came to them like the din and bustle of another star.

III

The great dove-coloured limousine slid up the pavement and stopped noiselessly, like some winged vehicle of an inventor's dream, and the old rabbi entered the store. And as he came the frozen hearts of the three who were waiting began beating again. Before, it had been like a deathbed vigil, with the hope of a famous surgeon arriving, who might or who might not possess the power to help them. But as soon as they caught sight of him their doubts fled. A great beauty seemed to radiate from the old

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cleric's head, a beauty from without more than from within. A wistfulness showed dimly in his eyes. He acknowledged the hurried introduction to Rita Allen and the antiquary with a silent bow, and he turned to Master questioningly.

"It's back here," said the copy reader; and he led the way.

They went behind the screen, and the vision of the great bronze box rose to meet them. On its stout table it stood square and massive like an old treasure chest, and the morning sun crept through the windows and bathed it in iridescent glory. To Rita Allen and Van Brunt and Master it still stood majestic as ever, but the sense of terror it evoked had disappeared in presence of the old Levite. Beneath the power of it they recognised the dominant notes of beauty and sanctity. It was like recognising the motif of Life, or the motif of Death, or the motif of planets spinning through the void.

The rabbi stepped forward, and his silver head bent. He stopped and words crept through his lips in a faint croon.

"Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions:
How he sware unto the Lord and vowed to the mighty God of Jacob;

'Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;

'I will not give sleep to mine eyes or slumber to mine eyelids,

'Until I find a place for the Lord, for the mighty God of Jacob . . .'"

And Rita Allen, as she stood there, seemed to feel

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herself leave her body, and to traverse space and time in one swift transverse flight. The weaponed walls of the store fell apart for her as the enclosure of reality fades before the invasion of a dream. The busy hum of Fulton Street became the faint droning of honey bees, became a sibilant murmur, was silent. Straightway as far as her eye could see, a grim desert stretched—grey, broken here and there by little clumps of green and by tall, gaunt rocks.

The shuffling march of an army sounded musically in her ears, and she saw it vaguely, a great blot of drab grey and black and white, with its captains and its horsemen, its plodding soldiers, its uncomplaining women. A spot of white caught her eye. The vanguard of the host, it seemed to her, and as she looked she saw white-robed priests bearing a thing of gold and cedar wood by slim staves upon their shoulders. She saw their clean-boned, clean-shaven faces, with the seal of eternity on them. The voice of the rabbi broke in on her like a faint murmur from the clouds:

“Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou and the ark of thy strength.

‘Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness and thy saints cry for joy . . .’”

The light in which she was became dimmer. In the west the sun hung like a gigantic ruby over a sky-line that faded unconsciously into a massive surf of cloud. The desert pricked out into blue and mauve shadows. The shuffling ceased. The moving host stopped slowly as if a giant brake had touched it. It swirled into a vast pool of eddying men and

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women and horses and beasts of burden. There was a babel of strange sounds—a guttural language, sinuous and low-pitched, the shrill whining of camels, the scraping of tent poles along the sand.

The white-robed priests stood rigid with the staves on their shoulders. Strange figures, in a blur of colour, of gold and blue and purple and scarlet moved quickly about. A vast tent reared itself. The priests marched into it with their burden and reappeared suddenly. They took up their places at the corners of the tent, with folded arms, with proud, impassive faces, with short, heavy swords by their thighs.

Night fell with the suddenness of a stone into the sea. Over in the east a thin silver edge of moon showed. Watch fires flashed suddenly, flaming red pin points of things. There was the clashing sound of timbrels, of voices raised in song. From the great tent a mellow golden light streamed and made gigantic silhouettes of the moving soldiery.

A little humming struck her ears, like the crackling of an electric spark. She turned suddenly, in mid-air as it seemed, and the life in her was struck as by a numbing blow. Above the giant tent a great wither of flame was rushing upward—a thin, straight pillar of red, like the column of a Doric temple. It seemed to be cutting upward vaguely until it vanished between the stars. And then she felt she was falling through space, like a partridge struck by a hunter's shot, and that somewhere she would strike something with a sickening thud.

And then, with a great sense of relief, she felt Van

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Brunt's great arms about her. She came to dimly, and she realized he was carrying her to the front of the shop.

"Put me down!" she clamoured in a fierce whisper.
"I don't want to go!"

He set her on her feet, and his face took on that shy, puzzled expression of his that seemed to wonder whether he should ever understand her.

They turned and went back silently and carefully behind the screen. The rabbi still stood with his hands stretched out and his head lowered before the great bronze chest. Master was erect and expectant near the screen. They ranged themselves by his side.

" . . . and ye shall be gathered one by one, oh ye children of Israel," the old rabbi intoned. His voice boomed out loud and full like a trumpet.
" . . . they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt. . . ."

The three watchers stood still like cataleptic figures. Time was lost to them in a vast swaying of the universe. The four walls of the room became limitless space. Outside, not fifty yards from them, they knew, the world went about its accustomed tasks. There were the cheery din and laughter of the streets, the sturdy walk of men, the pleasant laughter of women, the harmony of song. But in here, they felt, they were prisoners, and had been prisoners for countless centuries. Their brains span like whirligigs.

"For I will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

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‘Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven . . .

‘Sing and rejoice, oh daughter of Zion, for lo, I come . . .’”

The rabbi walked slowly toward the bronze box. Master clutched Van Brunt by the arm.

“Go over and unlock it,” he whispered. “You’re the only one who can.”

Van Brunt took a couple of steps forward. He stopped suddenly and his face blanched beneath its tan. A cold wind seemed to play about his head. The rabbi had put out both hands and was raising the bronze lid slowly.

“My God!” said Van Brunt; “it’s opening for him! It’s opening itself, don’t you see?”

The lid of the bronze chest rose with the rabbi’s delicate hands on its edges. They saw him look downward. They watched the silver disk of his head and waited breathlessly.

“A handful of dust,” they heard him say slowly; “of wood dust and stone dust, and the flicker of gold.”

A moment passed like a day. A great sense of strangeness came over the hearts of the watchers. It was as if a white curtain had risen slowly and they were looking at the world as it was before Joseph fled into Egypt or Herod reigned.

“A little mound of dust,” the rabbi murmured, “and the shadow of a little gold.” He closed the great bronze box reverently and stepped back. He raised his head.

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A trio of heavy black figures appeared from behind the screen. They had evidently entered after the rabbi. They took the chest carefully and carried it out. Van Brunt saw it pass through the door and disappear into the waiting grey car. The rabbi turned to Master with a slow, happy smile.

"Good-bye, my son," he said, "I am going home."

"Home?" said the copy reader. He seemed to sense some hidden meaning in the words.

"I am going home," the rabbi repeated. "I am going home to Zion"—he lowered his head—"with the Ark of the Lord."

The light that Master remembered flashed in his eyes.

"And they shall all come after me," he continued. "Little by little they shall follow. From White Russia and from Little Russia, from America and the East, from the South, from everywhere they will come. Like homing swallows, a little vanguard, a scattered following, a great driving wedge. They are coming even now."

He looked out into space, his great eagle's eye glistening, as if he saw clearly in the distance the flat seaports of Palestine and the green hills rising behind.

"Good-bye," he said abruptly, and he went out.

And as he walked out the watchers recognised in his mien the spirit of a mighty leader whom men would follow unquestioningly, and die on the journey uncomplainingly, blessing the day they had set forth.

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IV

The clatter of Fulton Street broke in on them gradually, and then fully, like an orchestra rising to a vast burst of sound. The Elevated train crashed high overhead. Lorries rumbled by. There was the brazen call of motors. They saw the old, familiar current of people passing. A van driver winked impudently at a pretty woman, and she blushed with an embarrassed smile. A newsboy raced past shouting tidings of the war.

"Well," said Master. He cleared his throat.
"That's over."

He looked about the shop with a comforted, benign expression, like a man picking up landmarks after a long absence. His eye roved over the weapons and armour on the wall, over the litter of idols about the shop, over the queer lamps and ornaments on the tables. He regarded the giant Tatar with a fatuous smile. He gazed with an air of dignified appreciation at the coloured man dusting the shelves in the front of the store. He put his hand in his vest pocket and produced his monocle. He fitted it into his eye. His easy manner returned to him.

"Oh, by the way, Jan," he drawled mellowly, "I gave that box to Doctor Bogorza. I never said a word about payment or anything. I couldn't very well——"

The antiquary stopped him with a quick wave of hand.

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"For heaven's sake, don't talk about that! Of course you were right."

"I knew you wouldn't mind," Master said lightly.

He looked at Rita Allen. The colour had come back to her cheeks and she stood with her hands clasped together and her eyes shining. She was looking at nothing. It seemed as if she were garnering carefully the memory of a great moment. Van Brunt stood erect and silent. Master could see something was on his mind.

"Well, what is it, Jan?" he bantered. "Tell mother."

The antiquary looked at him dreamily.

"I'm not regretting it's gone," he said, "and gone to the man who has it now. But that was the greatest thing I shall ever have."

Master took a step forward. His eye glistened. His jaw shot forward.

"You fool!" he snapped.

Rita Allen span about. She looked at Master as if he had suddenly gone mad.

"You idiot!" he continued. "The greatest thing you can ever have! Bah! The greatest thing you could ever have is standing right beside you, and you can have it any time it permeates into your brain to take it. The fool's eyes are on the ends of the earth——"

He caught sight of Rita Allen's flaming face.

"I don't care a hang, Rita! Here are you two looking at each other with eyes that would shame a sick calf, and neither of you has the sense to say anything. You make me tired, both of you."

THE BRONZE BOX

Van Brunt leaned forward. His face was white. His hands trembled.

"Is that so, Rita?" he whispered. He watched the colour inflame her cheeks to scarlet. "Is that so?"

She looked at him a moment slowly and tears stole into her eyes.

"Of course it's so, Jan," she said. "Of course it's so, dear."

His arms went about her like calipers. She nestled closely into his shoulder and a little succession of sobs rose to her lips. Van Brunt's arms closed more tightly still. He threw his head up. A great sense of tenderness and of triumph swept through him. It seemed to him that his heart was burgeoning suddenly into buds and green leaves. He wanted to send from his throat a great brazen shout of victory that would re-echo like thunder among the clouds.

The copy reader walked discreetly toward the door. He noticed appreciatively the back of the huge Tatar turned on the antiquary and Rita Allen. He noticed also the astounded countenance of the coloured porter looking at them with white eyes.

"Get out!" he shouted. "Get out!"

The coloured man opened the door and fled, his feather duster still in his hand. The copy reader waited a moment and then turned.

"Might I suggest," he said in cutting tones, "that it would be in much better taste to adopt these unseemly amorous attitudes in private. A shop has its uses—like those of storing, displaying and selling

THE SON OF LEVI

goods. As a place for the promiscuous embracing of the sexes—— Thank you.”

They fell apart, a little shamefacedly, their eyes shining with happiness. Master produced a vast green handkerchief and began polishing his monocle.

“Have you any money, Jan,” he asked suddenly.

The antiquary thrust a hand into his pocket. He produced a mass of green bills and clinking silver.

“Real money,” the copy reader modified sweetly. “Five hundred or a thousand dollars, two, perhaps three. You will need it to bail me out.”

They looked at him in astounded silence.

“You may have forgotten the little matter of Tumid the sheik, and of Ibrahim Ibn-Yussuf, who describes himself as a poet and the son of a poet.” He adjusted his monocle. “I have not. The police can hardly interfere in an affair of this kind, so I am going to handle things myself. I am going down to whale either or both of them within an inch of their ill-spent lives. I will be able to arrange things with the police afterward, but in the mean time they will bring me to a magistrate’s court and place me in jail.”

“But, look here, Jean,” the antiquary exploded, “this isn’t——”

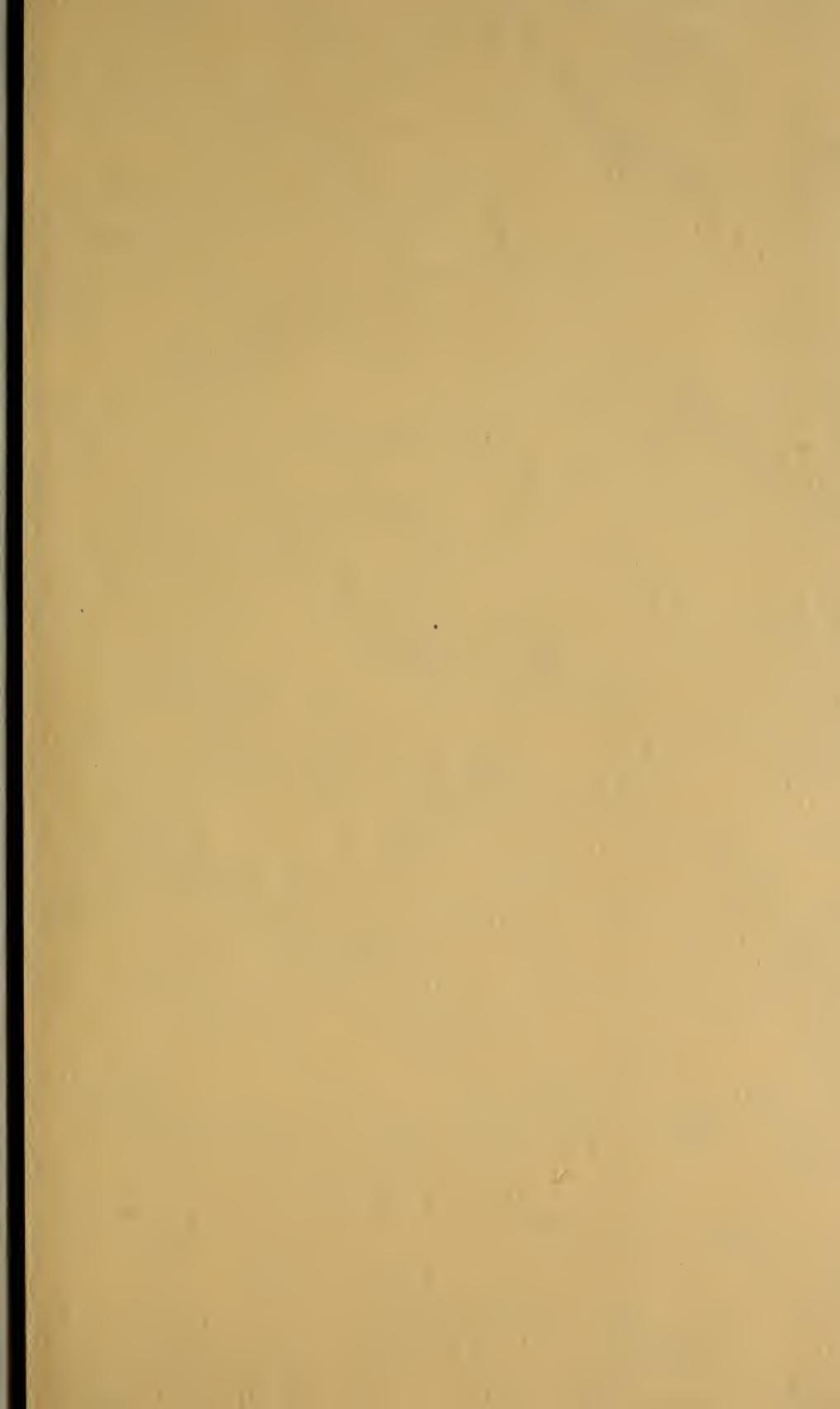
“I know it isn’t in my line,” Master argued. “I loathe brawls, and I love peace like a devoted mistress. But in this case I’m going to waive my rule. Don’t worry. If either of them fights back I shall knock him out. You hit him with the left hand on the right jaw, and with the right hand on the left jaw simultaneously, and he falls unconscious. The sport-

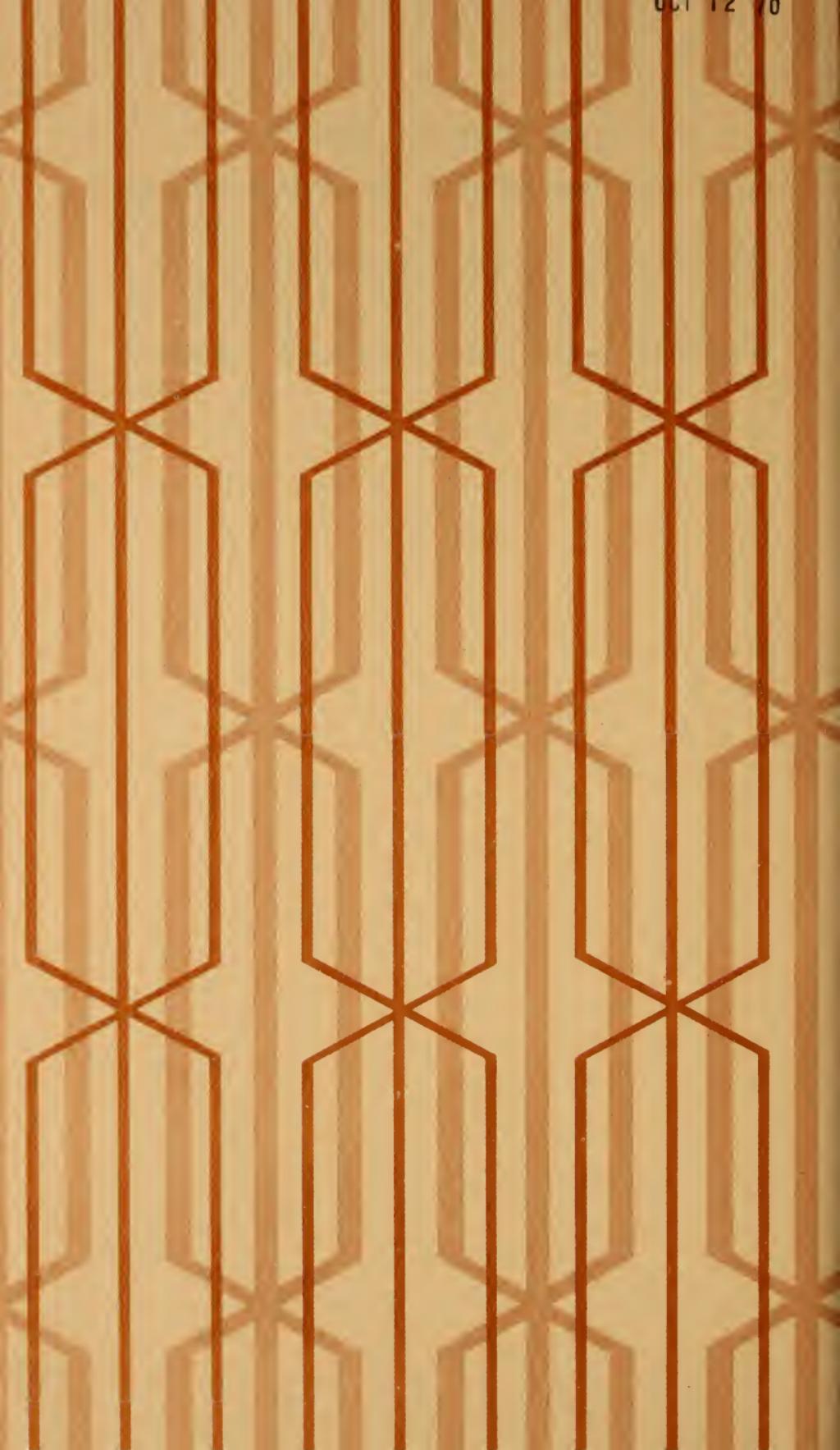
THE BRONZE BOX

ing editor told me so. Come to court when you're telephoned."

And with a gesture of farewell he left them. They saw him pass the window, his chest thrown forward, his shoulders back, like a soldier stepping out martially to the twitter and the rattle of the fife and drum.

THE END





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